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REVERSIONS IN THE AFRICAN CHURCH: A CASE STUDY OF
THE BAGISU CHRISTIANS OF UGANDA

by
Francis Manana

dissertation submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree,
Doctor of Missiology
E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism
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May 1996

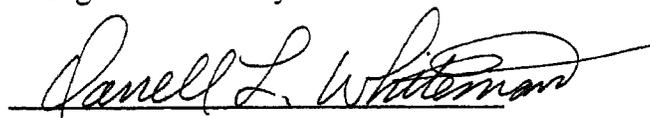
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This dissertation, entitled
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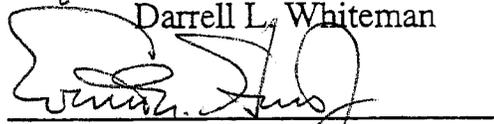
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ABSTRACT

Reversions in the African Church: A Case Study of the Bagisu
Christians of Uganda.

Among the challenges facing and threatening the church in Africa is the problem of reversions, in which Christians revert to traditional beliefs and practices, particularly during times of crises. These reversions are often related to the realm of spirits and involve witchcraft, sorcery, and evil spirits.

This study explores why Bagisu Christians in Uganda, after a century of Christian influence, continue to resort to traditional beliefs and practices when confronted with issues related to the spirit world. In developing the study, historical and field data were obtained from Church Missionary Society archives and from interviews among the Bagisu. Anthropological models were used to form the theoretical framework for understanding the possible dynamics involved in the phenomenon of reversions. This study draws on the biblical, Western, and traditional understanding of the spirit world as well as on

differences in worldviews and belief systems to inform the investigation, and the subsequent discussion provides clues toward a possible explanation of the problem of reversions.

In this study, possible causes of the trend are identified and recommendations are proposed including: 1) taking the Bagisu people seriously with their worldview and belief systems which include the spirit world as a real entity, affecting events in life; 2) making use of the place of ritual activity; 3) using the *maduli* (small groups) as natural structures among the Bagisu by which such issues can be addressed; 4) recovering the supernatural dimension of the gospel; and 5) adapting Paul's teaching on principalities and powers to provide Christian workers with an understanding of their relationship to Christ.

The study has several missiological implications. Other societies similar to the Bagisu, facing a similar problem of reversions, could benefit from the findings. This study should generate further investigation in this and related areas with the view to revitalizing the church in Africa.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Problem of Reversions

Rene Padilla, speaking at the 1974 Congress on World Evangelization on the importance of culture in the communication of the gospel, charged that “some missionaries [European and North American] exported cultural Christianity rather than the authentic gospel” (Stott and Coote 1979: ix). Stott (1982:7) recalls that Padilla was “criticized” for the charge of “the distorted” message, but admits, “It was hurtful to us to hear him say this, but of course he was quite right.”

Culture is a powerful force. When it is properly understood, it yields enormous dividends in the proclamation of the gospel. On the other hand, when culture is ignored or misunderstood, grave implications follow, as the needs of the recipients of the gospel are not addressed and therefore are not met by the gospel proclamation. Yet because these needs are real, they must be addressed. According to Stott, despite the works of communication theorists like Kraft and Nida, most cross-cultural witnesses do not make deliberate attempts to take the culture of their target audiences seriously (Stott

and Coote 1979:ix). Whether because of ignorance or arrogance, a lack of respect is reflected for the cultures of the target audiences. Stott's comments on the relationship between communicators of the gospel and the recipients of that gospel are helpful and provide a setting for the present discussion. Stott (1982:5-6) recognizes that on the one extreme some cross-cultural witnesses operate on the assumption of the "total fluidity" of the gospel message whereby "they discover the gospel only when they have arrived on the mission field." The implication of this assumption is that there is no such thing as a revealed gospel. Such an approach overemphasizes the recipient's culture at the expense of the Word of God.

Stott delineates the other extreme in which some cross-cultural witnesses employ "total rigidity" in their approach to evangelization. Their methodology calls for "precise formulas that must be repeated more or less word for word," thus ignoring the cultural context of the target group. This was the approach most often used in the evangelization of Africa, whereby emphasis was laid on the acquisition of disembodied truth presented in Western categories of knowledge. As Bengt Sunkler (Hayward 1975:31) observes, "The Western approach to evangelism in Africa was largely

catechistic -- intellectual.”

A third approach, one represented in this study, seeks to steer a course between these two extremes, taking seriously both the text of Scripture and the context of the recipient. Stott (1982:6) calls this approach “contextualization” in that it “creatively relates the given gospel to the given situation.” Basically, a balance of faithfulness to the gospel text with sensitivity to the cultural situation is sought in this view.

This study seeks to challenge cross-cultural witnesses and local Christian workers to take seriously the cultural context of any primal people, such as the Bagisu, with the view that such an approach would minimize reversions to traditional beliefs and practices during times of crises.

According to Barrett (1982:687), “One of the most vigorous examples of Christianity existing anywhere in Africa is found in Uganda.” He estimates that 78.3% of the population are Christian adherents, with Roman Catholic making up the largest group, 48% of the total adherents, followed by the Church of Uganda (Anglican) with 25% of the Christians in the country. Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists, the Orthodox Church, and indigenous churches constitute 5.3%. Muslims and traditional religionists make up the

rest of the population (Barrett 1982:687).

Christianity was introduced into Uganda by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) at the request of *Kabaka* (King) Mutesa. Henry M. Stanley, an explorer and journalist, met the king, who convinced him of the need for missionaries. Following Stanley's appeal to the CMS in London, the first missionaries, locally known as *Baingereza* (British), arrived in Uganda in 1877. Two years later, the Catholic White Fathers, locally known as *Bafransa* (French), arrived. The Muslims were already active in the area by the 1850s because of the slave trade and general commerce (Tuma 1978:4-5).

The king shrewdly sought to play one party against the other. The unfortunate result was war, deportation, exile, and martyrdom. An estimated 300 Baganda Christians, both Anglican and Catholic, died for their faith (King 1970:48; Parrinder 1969:131). However, despite these initial setbacks, Christianity has flourished in Uganda. Barrett (1982:686) estimates that 84.5% of the Ugandan population will be Christian by the year 2000.

But this rosy picture presents only the quantitative growth. From observation, one must conclude that the quality of Christianity in Uganda has not matched the numerical growth. There is apparent lack of maturity in the

faith, which leads to the problem of Christians reverting to traditional beliefs and practices, particularly during times of crises. This problem threatens the life of the Church and should concern missionaries and church leaders.

In every culture, genuine biblical Christianity demands consistency between belief and practice. On the other hand, it has been witnessed that after tireless and sacrificial labor, missionaries have gone back locales only to discover that the converts among whom they had once worked have reverted to traditional religions. Such occurrences are common and are apparently associated with crises related to such matters as witchcraft, sorcery, and evil spirits.

Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to discover why Bagisu Christians in Uganda, after over a century of Christianity, continue to resort to traditional means when they are confronted with crises related to the spirit realm of ancestors, spirits, witchcraft, and magic. Speaking from his own pastoral experience in Africa, Father Okoye (1992:286) recalls how the reality of the spirit world, “invisible mystical forces, powers and spirits of ancestors,” affected the African people. In the light of his experience and dealings with these spiritual forces, he

insisted that “African theologians should investigate the ‘principalities and powers’ in the New Testament, an aspect glossed over, if not denied, by [some] Europeans” (1992:287). This study takes seriously this challenge in the hope that a further contribution might be made toward the solution of this complex situation. There is a need to identify the factors behind the phenomenal reversions and develop a model for guarding Bagisu Christians against those factors.

Nature of the Problem

To illustrate the seriousness of either ignoring or denying the reality of the spirit world, Professor Ranger has cited incidents from Central Africa that involved death as recorded in the diary of Bishop Vincent Lucas. Confident in their scientific understanding of the world, two African men, a clergyman and a school teacher, challenged the local population, asserting that their practice of witchcraft was mere superstition. Following this confrontation, the two men died, one after the other. Ranger (1972:233) observes that “The teaching of their church gave them no help in dealing with witchcraft belief and no protection against witchcraft attacks.” The two men confronted witchcraft, an entity in the spirit world, and died. The majority of ministers

tend to ignore the spirit world until they are confronted by its forces. In either case, Christians continue to revert to traditional beliefs and practices to deal with issues related to the spirit world because the church has provided no solution to these problems.

Father Okoye (1992:286) cites a similar case which was witnessed by Professor Mbiti in Uganda. The following incident, well known in Mbale, illustrates the incongruence, or “lack of fit,” between the Anglican Church’s teaching and the Bagisu traditional religious system regarding issues related to the spirit world. Rev. James Muginge, a trained teacher and graduate of Bishop Tucker Theological College (the major English Training Institute for the Anglican clergy established by the CMS), was certain that a matter reported to him was fictitious. He did not believe in the existence of the spirit world and regarded spirits, witchcraft, magic and ancestral associations as primitive and superstitious. Mr. Musumali, a layman and the chairman of the local congregation, was in deep trouble. He had consulted a diviner to protect his family from frequent sickness which was believed to have been “sent” by an envious neighbor. During the previous week, two of his sons had been involved in a motor accident. From a traditional point of view, the

natural course of action was to consult a specialist to determine the cause of such illness and misfortune. The specialist would then employ counteractive measures to curb the menace, a process that was usually conducted in secret.

Unfortunately for Mr. Musumali, the counteractive charms he brought home to tackle the spiritual forces responsible for illness and misfortune in his family worked against the entire family. These forces were of the dangerous type, known as *mayembe* (horn), by them inanimate objects would fly at will, hitting people and destroying property. The situation soon got out of hand, and the matter became public. The secret was out, and the pastor heard of it. In the meantime, Mr. Musumali was desperate. He needed help, but no one ventured to visit his family for fear of being hit by the flying objects.

On hearing what was going on, Rev. Muinge set off for Mr. Musumali's home. After all, it was his pastoral responsibility to minister fully to those in need. Approaching Mr. Musumali's compound, he was met by flying objects from every direction; fortunately he was not injured. Then he tried to take refuge in the house, but furniture was also flying in all directions. The pastor ran for his life.

In the meantime, Mr. Musumali had consulted another specialist to

counteract the charms that turned against him and his family. The diviner did not have to come to the scene but simply sent his charms, *kifaru* (a powerful captured supernatural force the diviner manipulates to accomplish difficult tasks), to capture these destructive forces. Even though the Musumalis continued to serve in the church, they also continued to pay the specialist for safety for the rest of their lives.

As for Rev. Muinge, supernatural events which he had previously understood as unreal in the age of science and reason, and which he had interpreted as “superstitious,” took on a new reality. His epistemology was undermined. His rationalism had required that he interpret accidents as “mechanical failure” and sickness as “caused by germs.” Some naturalistic means was necessary to explain the problem and to determine a solution. As Taylor (1958:193) explains, “The Western idea of causation deals with the question of ‘how’ but the African idea of causation deals with the question of ‘why,’ concerning incidents of this nature.”

Bagisu (Bagisu are the people, while Bugisu is the district the Bagisu people inhabit), along with other primal societies, do understand that events such as illness and misfortune can be explained mechanically in terms of

"how," yet the ultimate causes are spiritual. Questions would be asked like, "Why do only my children fall sick and not my neighbor's?" "Why would the accident take place when my sons are in the vehicle?" "Why did it happen at that particular place or day?" Hastings (1976:64) puts it well when he notes that there is always a "dual explanation" for every occurrence among African peoples. It is this inclusion of the spiritual realm in every occurrence that prompts the consulting of diviners. Specialists will determine whether "these are related to the activities of their ancestors, other spirits or malevolent neighbors who have set the spirits on them" (Hastings 1976:64). With this frame of reference, nothing can be taken for granted. There is no such thing as an "accident" or "chance" in any situation or circumstance. As Mbiti (1969:214-215) has observed, everything "must be 'caused' by some agent either human or spiritual." As ultimately the cause is traced to the spirit world, the solution, therefore, is to be found with the diviners who address such needs (Hastings 1976:70).

In such cases, the church seems impotent. Hastings (1976:38) describes the approach of early missionaries toward Africans as "cultural and theological rigidity." Max Warren (1965:118), the former General Secretary

of the CMS, has observed that those African religious systems that were ignored, rejected or suppressed “have not disappeared; they have gone underground.” Hence when there is a crisis related to the spirit world it becomes evident that the African religious system is alive and well. This religious system is dealt with through the active roles of specialists. As a consequence of the costly mistake of ignoring or rejecting an existing reality, reversion to traditional beliefs and practices is common among African Christians.

Research Questions

This study is guided by four research questions:

1. Is there a reversion to traditional beliefs and practices among the Bagisu Anglican Christians?
2. Do these reversions occur primarily during times of life crises?
3. What are the probable causes for these reversions?
4. What model would give the Bagisu Anglican Christians answers to their questions and provide functional substitutes for the traditional beliefs and practices so that during times of crisis they will no longer need to revert, but will be able to find Christian solutions to their problems?

Significance of the Study

The problem of reverting to folk religion when faced with issues in the realm of the spirit world is acute for many Christians in primal societies. Considering that primal societies constitute a significant portion of the world and of the Christian population, it is imperative that this problem be addressed.

The study will help local Christian church leaders and cross-cultural witnesses in primal societies like Bagisu become more aware of the spirit world and thus become better able to address the needs involving that realm. This study proposes a model comprised of five components developed to minimize reversions. (1) The first component is the need for cross-cultural witnesses and local ministers to take the culture and worldview of the Bagisu and other primal societies seriously in the process of evangelizing and discipling. (2) The second component is the use of ritual activity where applicable as a means for the church to participate not only in the life cycle events of Bagisu believers but also in every aspect of life. It includes the Christian sacraments and other creative means. (3) The utilization of *Maduli*, which are natural social structures equivalent to Wesley's classes

and Zinzendorf's *ecclesialae-in-ecclesia*, is a third component. These would be centers of renewal and the natural place to deal with issues which affect the Bagisu in their own setting. (4) Another component of the solution is the supernatural dimension of the gospel that needs to be consciously brought into the life of the church. Taylor (1957) referred to this dimension as the New Testament type of Christianity. (5) The final component is the ministry of teaching the Bagisu by proclaiming Christ's victory over principalities and powers in the universe. It must be pointed out that evil forces which are dangerous to humans are the ones Paul has in mind. Believers are assured of victory in Christ, but they must be in union with him and put on the armor of God in order to withstand the wiles of the evil one (Ephesians 6:13). There is no need to fight or resist good and neutral spirits. Good or benevolent and neutral spirits may have functional substitutes, i.e., the Holy Spirit, angels, and the person and presence of Christ. We recognize the theological formulations (systematic theology) and liturgical practices which are already in place in the mainline churches. This study suggests that church leaders and cross-cultural witnesses will use Paul's teaching, in addition to those already established teachings and practices, to address issues related to the spirit

world among primal societies.

From this study it is hoped that the result of combining these components will lead to the emergence of a more vital Christian church in Bugisu and other similar societies and to the significant diminishing of reversions to traditional beliefs and practices.

Methodology

Data on the contemporary situation were obtained by means of interviews among the Bagisu of Uganda in September 1992. The library research was employed to obtain historical data. The CMS documents located in the archives of the University of Birmingham, England, were examined. Both historical and contemporary data were needed to understand the problem of Christians reverting to traditional beliefs and practices and to propose a solution to the problem.

Contemporary Data and Instrumentation

During the Summer of 1992, the researcher went to Bugisu (a district the Bagisu people inhabit) in Uganda to collect data from Bagisu Christians to determine the extent to which they reverted to traditional beliefs and practices when they were confronted with crises in life. To achieve this purpose, a

questionnaire designed by Kirby (1985) was used (see appendix 1 for the instrument). Two research assistants, Mrs. Pat Makiika, a retired primary school teacher, and Mr. Stephen Namisi, a welder, administered the questionnaire. They interviewed a total of 79 Anglican Christians in Buginyanya and Bumasifwa counties. An additional 16 heads of *Maduli* served as informants of the Bagisu worldview. Following Kirby's pattern, I interviewed two pastors whose church members had been interviewed by the research assistants to obtain information regarding the church's response to the issues raised by the instrument.

To provide a framework for understanding the use of Kirby's questionnaire, it is helpful to give an overview of his study. Kirby's research was prompted by two concerns. First was the rate at which the Anufo of Ghana, some of whom were Christians, were being converted to Islam. This concern led to the second, whether Christianity dealt with their everyday problems as well as Islam did (Kirby 1985:16). Kirby's assumption was that Islam has always been regarded as a viable religious alternative for the Anufo. He believed that "the Anufo never regarded Christianity as a religion, i.e., a religion as they would define it in terms of problem detection, analysis

and solution” (Kirby 1985:20). To test this thesis he chose 58 problems which involve a traditional analysis and solution involving spiritual entities.

Like the Bagisu, the Anufo had a similar worldview comprised of the seen and the unseen, the tangible empirical world and the world of ancestors, various spirit entities and God. Unseen realities are present in relationships and events, affecting things in the visible world (Kirby 1985:17). Misfortunes and illness are understood primarily as signs of disharmony and therefore signal the need to re-establish the former balance.

A continuous balance is maintained through ritual action at various shrines which are points of contact with unseen agents (Kirby 1985:17-18).

In order to accomplish his task, Kirby utilized a Muslim helper who interviewed 150 Muslim converts and a Christian helper who interviewed 100 Christian converts. Both helpers used the instrument Kirby designed. Four categories of responses to each question were available to the respondents: traditional, syncretistic, orthodox and no solution. With 58 problems or issues raised in the questionnaire, the results indicated that the Muslim converts chose solutions in the following way: 27 traditional, 18 syncretistic, 10 orthodox and 3 no solutions. Christian converts chose 54 traditional, 4

syncretistic and 0 response to orthodox and 0 no solution.

His conclusion was, “It seemed that Christianity did not offer any satisfactory alternatives to traditional beliefs, but rather ignored these entirely” (Kirby 1985:16). In his discussions with Christian leaders, Kirby discovered that the church had no solution to the problems related to the spirit world among the Anufo. He concluded that Muslim converts tended to be more orthodox than Christians in the way they dealt with the crises related to the spirit world. To determine the church response to the questions raised, Kirby interviewed catechists and evangelists who served in the areas where the research was conducted. Kirby reports,

In most cases even catechists and evangelists were hard pressed to offer Christian solutions, for there simply weren't any. The answer given by one trained catechist was 'there must be a Christian solution to this but I don't know what it is.' (1985:23)

In conclusion, Kirby contrasts the two faiths, pointing out that whereas for Christianity “the problems of the vast majority of the Anufo Christians are not being ministered to by the churches” (1985:23), “the Muslims, however, offer their own solutions for every traditional problem listed” (1985:23). Kirby's conclusion shows the need for the Christian community to evaluate past practice in the light of present crises which confront people like the Anufo

and Bagisu.

Because this study is concerned with the problem of reversions among Bagisu Christians, Kirby's questionnaire was an appropriate one to use. Like Kirby, the researcher interviewed two pastors in light of the questionnaire and the results and took notes from both the pastors and the informants. The results of the research via the questionnaire show the extent to which reversions occur among Bagisu Christians. Information from the informants provides a "feel" for the worldview of the Bagisu. The extent to which Bagisu Christians turn to traditional and syncretistic means to deal with problems related to the spirit world is the extent to which Christianity may not have addressed those needs.

Fifty-one out of the original 58 questions from Kirby's list were administered to 79 Bagisu Anglican Christians. Seven of the original questions were eliminated as irrelevant to the Bagisu context. Each question had four alternatives, from which the respondent chose the most appropriate one. Just as Kirby had designed the instrument, the alternatives offered to the respondents were "traditional," "syncretistic," "orthodox," and "no solution" or "not applicable."

Traditional solutions to an issue are those which involve spiritual entities within Bagisu tradition, i.e., diviners and the ancestral cult.

Divination is the means by which events that affect humans in the universe can be determined. By ancestral cult we mean the belief among Bagisu that the dead continue to live and are in relationship with the living, affecting the course of events in their lives. The dead depend on the living for well-being, and the living depend on the dead for health, fertility, provision and success in every sphere of life. The dead are primarily benevolent entities in the spirit realm.

These understandings form a frame of reference for the Bagisu people, a kind of mental map. This system of underlying assumptions regarding reality shapes the Bagisu worldview. Kraft (1979:54) defines worldview as “the central assumptions, concepts and premises more or less widely shared by members of a culture or a subculture.” In this case when we refer to traditional solutions we mean solutions which are founded on the belief that the universe is filled with spiritual forces: good, neutral, and evil. The good and neutral spirits are benevolent to the Bagisu. Specialists such as diviners and medicine men and women manipulate the good and neutral spiritual

forces for the good of humans. By so doing they counteract the evil that has been placed on humans either by angry ancestors or by witches and sorcerers who seek to harm humans. These specialists may recommend particular medications and/or rituals to deal with the issue at hand. When confronted with the problems of life, Bagisu deal with them in this folk way.

The second alternative is orthodox; these are the solutions prescribed by the CMS and the Church of Uganda. They are the accepted Christian/Western means of solving a particular problem. For instance, in the case of infertility, hospitals and prayer are recommended. In case of a dispute over land, the court is recommended. These orthodox solutions are offered to Christians and non-Christians alike.

The third method, a syncretistic method, is the application of both traditional and orthodox solutions to a given issue. A choice for this approach implies that there has not been a change in worldview in that Bagisu Christians are still utilizing traditional solutions. Sometimes this syncretism involves the use of Christian forms without their intended meaning, e.g. pressing a Bible on the sick to heal them or using a crucifix as a charm. In some cases it is a combination of traditional and orthodox, i.e., the use of

amulets along with protective Western medicine in the case of illness. In case of a conflict, one takes the case to the diviners as well as requesting prayer from the church. Examples like are numerous.

The final category requires no solution to the problem, i.e., not applicable or no longer a problem. There are many reasons for this category. The question at hand may have not been experienced by the respondents or they may not envisage any possible solution to it. The issue may not be applicable because the respondents are men and the issue raised has to do with women or vice versa.

Chapter six contains the report of the field work, the findings and their appropriate interpretation. The information provided by the informants and the pastors is reported in general categories as opposed to treating each individual issue separately. However, a sample of issues has been treated to give the reader a feel for the situation among the Bagisu.

Historical Data

CMS archives were examined in order to understand the response of CMS missionaries, local pastors, and evangelists to the spirit world. In these encounters did the missionary acknowledge, ignore, or reject the reality of the

spirit world? What were the consequences of these actions? These archival documents at the University of Birmingham, England, revealed life on the mission field as it was experienced by the missionaries. The researcher examined annual reports (which were then mandatory for every missionary to write) and personal letters as well as minutes from early missionaries who served in Uganda and Bugisu. This correspondence from missionaries in the field was always addressed to the General Secretary of the CMS, who in turn responded when necessary and then filed the documents.

The documents showed that some missionaries were ignorant of the reality of the spirit world and dismissed it and its related activities as superstition. However, when manifestations of the spirit realm became increasingly difficult to ignore, missionaries appealed to the government to ban any activities associated with the spirit world. Everyone was expected to comply with the regulations enacted by the government. Offenders were fined and imprisoned. Consequently, no spiritual solution was forthcoming from the Anglican Church to the spirit world crises faced by the Bagisu people. In effect, the attitude of the church and state forced spirit world beliefs and activities to go “underground,” only to re-surface when a crisis

appeared.

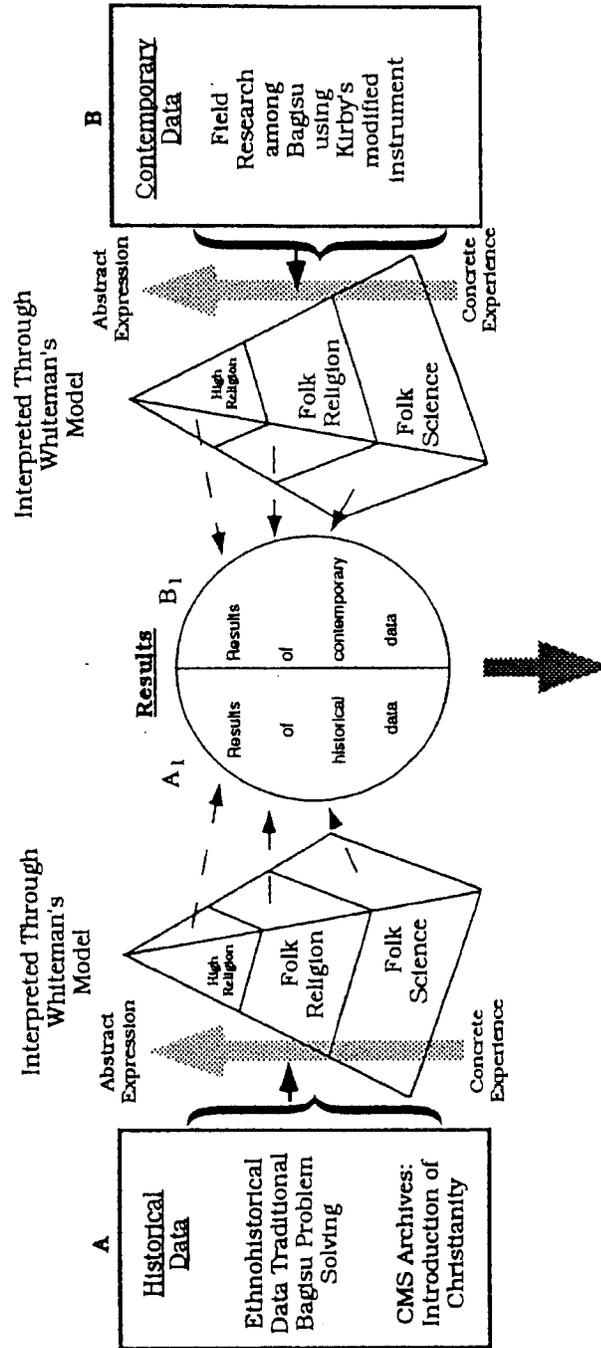
Theoretical Framework

In interpreting both the historical and the contemporary data, Hiebert's "Flaw of the Excluded Middle" (1982) and "Cognitive Domains" (1985a) models are used. These models provide the theoretical framework for understanding possible clues to the problem of reversion among Bagisu Christians.

People everywhere believe their own perception of reality is correct. However, one belief system is not better than another; each is different. Worldviews provide people with their basic assumptions about reality. For the Bagisu, worldview assumptions are linked to the reversion pattern. The theoretical framework illustrated below utilizes anthropological models as a means of unraveling the possible dynamics involved in the phenomenon of Christian reversion to traditional beliefs and practices. The differences between Bagisu and Western belief systems provide clues for a possible explanation of the problem of reversions. In this model, the historical and contemporary data collected from both CMS archives and from Bugisu will be interpreted through the cognitive domain and Hiebert's "Flaw of the

Excluded Middle" models to determine the extent and possible explanation of the problem of reversions (See figure 1 below.) A possible solution to the problem of reversions will be suggested based on these findings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



The Results of A¹/B¹ will test the Research Questions

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

The Excluded Middle

In his model Hiebert (1982) describes and highlights the similarities and differences between the Western worldview and the primal people's worldview. The Western worldview is described as two-tiered, whereas the primal society's worldview is all inclusive.

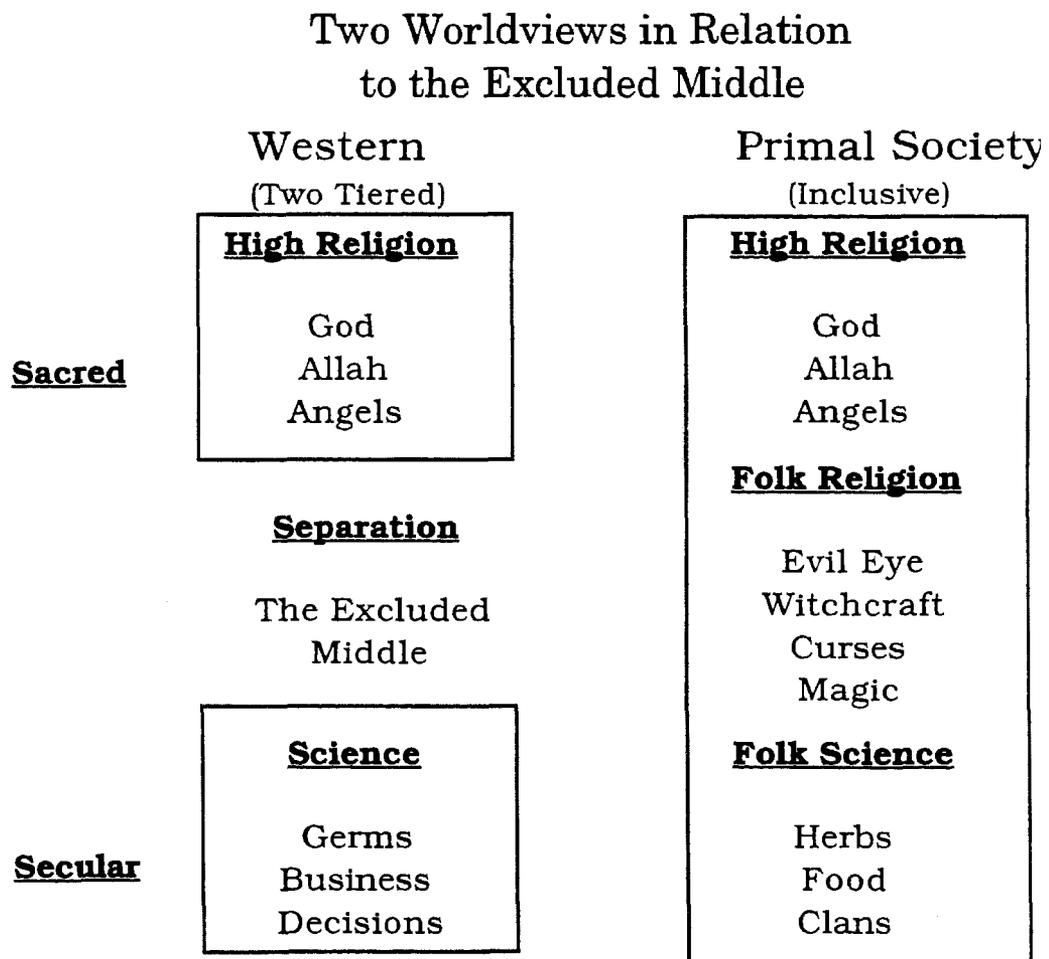


Figure 2: Hiebert's Excluded Middle

Hiebert explicitly points out that there is a middle level of reality which is real and is part of the experience of primal people, but which is non-existent in the perception of most Western persons. The title of his article, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," describes the gap between the Western view and the African or Asian view of reality. This middle dimension, once denied, creates a "gap" which the gospel, as traditionally presented by a Westerner, fails to address. Hiebert illustrates this middle level and how he as a child of Western culture could not recognize it:

As a scientist I had been trained to deal with the empirical world in naturalistic terms. As a theologian, I was taught to answer ultimate questions in theistic terms. For me the middle zone did not really exist. Unlike Indian villagers, I had given little thought to spirits of this world, to local ancestors and ghosts, or the souls of animals. For me these belonged to the realm of fairies, trolls and other mythical beings; consequently I had no answers to the questions they raised. (1982:43)

This model makes it clear that though humans are the same everywhere in terms of their basic needs and anatomy, the way in which they perceive reality is determined by their worldview. Dyrness in summarizing Hiebert's model called this a blind spot of Western missionaries who "reflected their Western training by thinking on only two levels: above God rules and is concerned with the eternal destiny of people; below, matter operates

according to scientific laws” (1990:187). In the context of cross-cultural missions, the dominant worldview of the missionary affects the way the respondents will understand and implement the Christian message in their daily lives. Should the missionaries’ message by-pass the way in which the target audience perceives reality, issues not addressed by the gospel will then be dealt with by traditional methods.

On the other hand, societies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America recognize the interrelationship between the natural and the supernatural. Events in the natural, physical world have a relationship with the spiritual entities in the supernatural realm. Hiebert (1982:43 ff.) charged that most Westerners have neglected the middle realm, the place where spiritual beings interact with the other two realms: the natural, where humans and their created institutions are guided by sight, experience, and scientific insights, and the supernatural where God, angels and demons dwell. Westerners contrast with the people in primal contexts for whom God, the “Excluded Middle” realm, and the natural realm are part of one whole. Witchcraft, magic, divination, and ancestral activities have a role in making sense of the events in the world. This interrelationship between the natural and the

supernatural realm provides the needed ontological balance.

In view of these different perceptions, Dyrness clarifies the relationship between the Western missionary and primal people like the Bagisu as follows:

As a result, when people like Venkayya [primal people], . . . come to missionaries to ask how the spirits and ancestors may be appeased, the missionaries have no answers--that realm simply does not exist for them. The middle level of powers that mediates between God and the material world is excluded. It is little wonder that Westerners have trouble "integrating" their secular and spiritual lives or that missions has been a major secularizing force in modern history. Here is one obvious place where a conscious interaction between worldviews is urgently needed. (1990:187)

Western missionaries who seek to communicate effectively among societies like the Venkayya and the Bagisu must shift their perception of reality to include the "Excluded Middle." If they insist on the Western two-tiered view, they risk perpetuating traditional religious beliefs and practices by not addressing them.

Alan Tippett dramatically illustrates the tragic mistake made by cross-cultural witnesses who do not differentiate a Western worldview from those of the target cultures in Latin America, Africa and Asia. To make the point clear, he equates it with how electrical appliances use different voltage:

I had procured a generator of 240 voltage, although my functioning apparatus was on 110; and it was impossible to tap the power of the former and to achieve the functioning of the latter. A missionary geared to a metaphysical level of evangelism in his generator cannot drive a motor of shamanic voltage. It is a tragic experience to find oneself with the right kind of power but of a wrong voltage. (1960:412-13)

His example may explain in part the impotence of many missionaries who have done their best to share the Christian message as they have received it from their institutions of learning. What many do not recognize is the fact that the universal message of the gospel has come to them in their own cultural categories. The questions and issues affecting their Western culture have been answered by the Christian message. Assuming that all people perceive reality the same way they do, missionaries have then attempted to use their cultural categories to share the gospel in other cultures. Finding apparent openness and even great response to their efforts, missionaries are surprised to find that people continue to deal with life crises using the old religious beliefs.

A lack of appreciation for the interaction of the supernatural in daily living may make it difficult to minister effectively among people such as the Bagisu, who feel trapped by the spiritual forces that surround and affect their

lives.

Cognitive Domains

The model of cognitive domains provides further understanding of the problem of reversion and movement toward a meaningful solution. The belief systems in every culture can be classified in broad categories of “high” religion “low” or folk religion, and sensory perception.

Cognitive domains have been explicated by Allison (1984) and are shared by Hiebert (1985a) in his book, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*. Hiebert categorizes the belief systems of Westerners with the term “high religion” and categorizes primal societies like Bagisu with the term “low religion,” commonly referred to as “folk religion.” These insights help make sense out of the relationship between Western missionaries and Bagisu Christians in the light of the Bagisu's continued use of traditional methods to deal with daily crises.

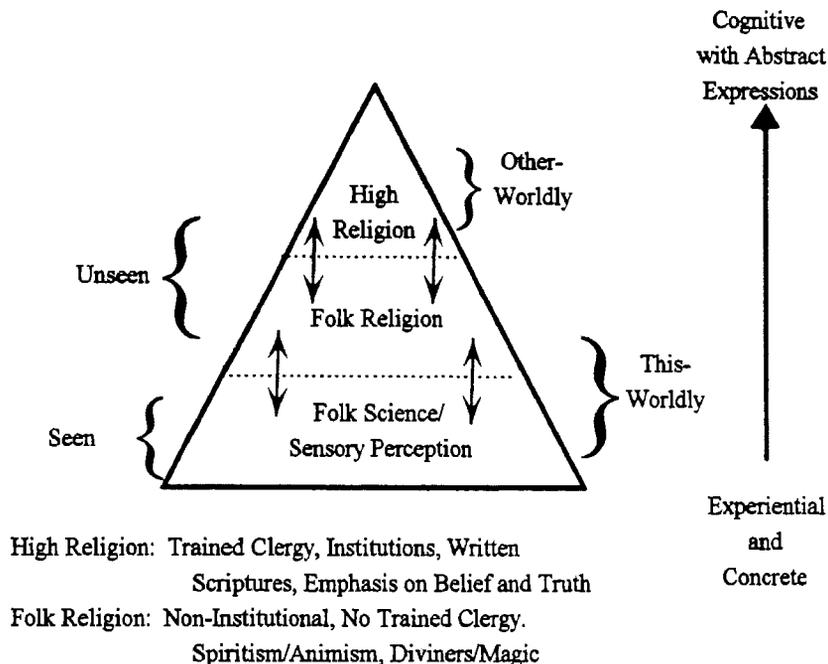


Figure 3: Cognitive Domain Model

Norman E. Allison (1984), a former missionary in Jordan, narrates a personal experience to illustrate the cognitive domain model in missions. In a Bible study conducted in his home, he focused on the "theological truth" which he learned at seminary and which was an important part of his reality and worldview. He observed that while the people were attentive, during the discussions "They discussed things totally unrelated to the Bible study. Killing a lamb and placing its blood on the front of a new car to keep away

the 'evil eye' seemed to be a significant spiritual experience for them. In the case of a sick person, placing a book of Psalms under the pillow to speed recovery was very important." He notes that he then understood that their discussion centered almost totally around "low religion" issues (Allison 1984:165).

The difference between the Western Christian missionary and the indigenous people of primal societies lies in the distinction in belief systems within their worldviews. High religion beliefs are characterized by:

(1) Questions and answers that are cosmic, such as the origin of the universe, the ultimate meaning of life and death, etc.; (2) Written texts fixing the authoritative body of beliefs; (3) Specialization with various leadership roles having defined, orthodox positions; (4) Central institutions such as temples, churches, mosques, and schools for training leaders; (5) Moral systems in which the gods are good and are in conflict with evil spirits. High religion includes Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism. (Allison 1984:167-168)

A major characteristic of high religion is the emphasis on truth which is explained in abstract concepts. The bulk of Western seminary training received by missionaries is on this level. Most Western missionaries therefore declare the truth they have without understanding or taking into consideration the recipients' belief system. As Allison points out, most

missionaries who serve among people of low religion get frustrated because

Western missionaries usually concentrate on high religion. Our heritage of Western thought, intensified by a long schooling process, reinforces this. In their theological preparation, students go further and further into abstract concepts. After graduation, they find it hard to relate to common people. Theological formulations are vital to the professionals, but very often they seem irrelevant to average people. "Scratching where it doesn't itch" is more common to our communication of the gospel than we like to admit. (1984:168)

While Western missionaries find themselves in the high religion situation, it is not by choice, rather by upbringing. To be effective in a system where religious beliefs are categorized as "low religion," missionaries must learn to recognize and understand the major tenets of "low religion" while maintaining their own religious beliefs. Allison provides us with the characteristics of "low religion":

(1) Relationships to problems of immediate, everyday life (not questions of ultimate matters), diseases, drought, plagues, warfare, etc.; (2) Informal organization -- leaders may even perform religious services incidentally to everyday work; (3) No written texts -- beliefs are found in myths, drama, ritual, and oral traditions. These forms are not "eternalized" in print and may therefore be reinterpreted for each new problem. (4) Few or no formal institutions. Special buildings are absent, and any training of leadership is informal, usually of the apprentice type; (5) Amoral system -- attributes of the spirit world are closely analogous to those of people. The spirits usually harm those who forget them and help those who serve them. (1984:168)

The belief systems portrayed by Allison shed light on why after over 100 years of Christianity, Bagisu Christians continue to consult diviners and other specialists in order to deal with issues related to the spirit world.

There is without doubt a legitimate place for written resources such as the Book of Common Prayer and the catechism. These are useful aids for instilling the systematic truths of Scripture and for directing worship. In addition to these important tools, rituals, dance and drama may be useful in evangelistic and pastoral ministries among the Bagisu.

The highly institutionalized and hierarchical Anglican Church, with its specialized roles, trained clergy, church buildings, catechism, and structured worship portrays a highly organized religion. One priest serves many churches from a centralized location. In contrast, the Bagisu belong to the “low religion” which depends on “untrained” charismatic leaders endowed with gifts to respond to those needs which arise in daily life. These leaders live among the people. When a problem arises for an ordinary believer, the mere distance and formality of the Anglican clergy is likely to put off the one seeking help.

Because the Bagisu leaders and specialists are always available to deal

with any crisis that affects the community, there is still dependence on traditional methods to deal with crises. The clergy may have to make efforts to keep in touch with the ordinary people in their everyday life struggles in order to minimize reversions. Their training, professionalism, and bureaucracy effectively remove them from where the real action is -- where people live. As the gospel message becomes more relevant to daily life, reversions should decrease.

As Whiteman (1983:281) has aptly observed, "If the missionary work is truly Christian, then it implies a radical change both for the individual and the society, but the change must be initiated from within, in response to a society's felt needs, not enforced from without to conform to the outsider's conception of proper behavior."

Allison's concluding remarks are appropriate:

Many non-Western groups are not hearing the gospel as well as we might think. Our High Religion abstractions do not answer questions they are asking. Nominal Christians may turn back to the old religion because its low religion meets their needs. Also, they may attach low religion meanings to Christian ideas. We must meet the non-Christian on the right psychological level of learning beliefs. (1984:169)

While the great (high) religions of the world primarily meet the abstract and

philosophical dimensions of the cognitive domains, the primal (low) religions primarily meet the needs on a sensory level where the concern of life is the here and now. Cross-cultural witnesses need to learn the belief systems of primal peoples in order to be in a better position to assist Christians in their faith. National ministers who have learned their Christianity from “two-tiered” missionaries need this training as well.

Functional Substitutes

Anthropologist A. R. Radcliffe-Brown in his book *The Andaman Islanders* (1964), has noted that culture as a system is like a living organism which is integrated by means of function and configuration. That means that each part of the culture plays a role which affects the whole. Function, according to Malinowski, is the role culture patterns play in filling human needs. In *The Dynamics of Cultural Change* (1961) Malinowski sets forth the “Functional Theory” of culture in which he points out that “the whole body of implements, the charters of its social groups, human ideas, beliefs and customs” are organized by a society “to cope with the concrete, specific problems which face him in his adaptation to his environment in the course of the satisfaction of his needs” (1961:42). When changes in the functions of

any institution within a culture are made, such functions may be replaced with similar ones in order to continue meeting the needs of that society. These substitutions are referred to as functional substitutes.

Everything in any given culture has some function in meeting the basic felt needs of the people of that culture. A custom or a cultural practice cannot be simply rejected without understanding its function in the first place. If a Christian worker rejects such customs because he or she deems them wrong, without an equivalent substitute, then the cross-cultural witness creates voids and vacuums in that society. Thus the use of functional substitutes which serve as “corrective mechanisms” (Tippett 1969:149) is necessary. “A functional substitute may be a form, a ritual, a symbol, a role, an idea, a craft, an occupation, an artifact, an economic pattern, or it may even be the Christian religion itself under certain ideal circumstances” (Tippett 1969:186).

A functional substitute may be an old form which is given a new value (Tippett 1969:184). “It covers up the possibility of the creation of cultural voids because of the discarding of forms and customs that cannot be accepted by the Christian faith” (Tippett 1969:149). Examples of functional substitutes

include baptism in place of rites of passage, or a Christian naming ceremony in place of the traditional naming ceremony. In cultures where hunting or fishing has economic significance, a traditional rite is often observed before the expedition. Its function is to ensure success. While these traditional ceremonies may be rejected by the Christian community, the function of such ceremonies should not be rejected. The pastor and the church elders can lead in the liturgy of the appropriate item invoking the divine presence of God and his blessing upon the expedition and the participants. A Christian rite of prayer for a successful hunting or fishing expedition may take the place of the traditional rite before the expedition. After consultation with the community of believers, a functional substitute should take the place of the former ceremonies.

The challenge for the Christian witness is to ensure that the functional substitute is acceptable and meets the felt needs of a given people. The cross-cultural witness must work together with local Christians to arrive at a functional substitute. As Tippett observed, "They [the suggested functional substitutes] may be perfectly adequate alternatives to the advocate, but they are not effective until accepted by the social group (converts to Christianity),

and even if accepted a completely different meaning may be attributed to them by the receptors” (1969:184). If functional substitutes do not solve the basic needs, especially the psychological ones, they fail in their effectiveness. It is necessary, therefore, for Christian workers to work closely with members of the group whom they are evangelizing to ensure that functional substitutes meet the felt needs of the group.

Summary

The problem of reverting to traditional ways of dealing with life issues, especially crises, among Christians in Bugisu, Uganda, is a serious one. This problem has not been understood nor its remedy sought.

I have postulated that culture is a powerful force that shapes the depth to which the gospel message and its implications can go among a people. Consequently, gospel proclamation should not preclude considering the cultural factors.

It has been observed that the early Christian missionaries, functioning from their own background, failed, ignored, or otherwise disregarded the spirit world of the peoples they evangelized, and the church ministers in modern times reflect that they are the products of the work of those

missionaries. What has also been observed is phenomenal reverting to non-Christian ways among Bagisu Christians when they are faced with crises. A theoretical framework using Hiebert's models, the "Excluded Middle" and "Cognitive Domains," has been employed to provide an interpretation relating to the contemporary and the historical data in the context of the problem of reversions. There is a need to identify the factors that contribute to this problem and to develop a model for equipping Bagisu Christians and Christian gospel workers to avoid reversions.

Teso districts to the North and bounded by Budama and Bunyole counties of Tororo District to its South. Bugwere county of Pallisa District lies to the West. To the East, Mbale is bordered by Kenya and separated from Uganda by Mount Elgon and the Lwakhakha River.

The Bagisu were food gatherers and hunters before the advent of agriculture and animal husbandry. As food gatherers, the common food stuffs were honey, fruits and tubers from the forests and river banks. Hunting was a chief source of food. However, the present day Bagisu are agriculturists and pastoralists. They grow such crops as bananas, rice, sweet and Irish potatoes, cassava, yams, maize, groundnuts, beans, peas, wheat, millet, coffee, cotton, and fruits. Animals they keep include cattle, goats, sheep, rabbits and pigs. Their domestic birds include chicken, turkey, and pigeons.

The Origin of the Bagisu

Since the origins of the Bagisu are uncertain, it is difficult to know when the tribe came into being. Traditionally, the Bagisu trace their origin to a man called Mundu whose wife was Seela. This woman was supposed to have belonged to the Kalenjin tribes of neighboring Kenya. The Bagisu believe that as a tribe they came from Mount Elgon (Masaaba) saying, "*Kwama Iburwa or Ibutwa,*" literally meaning, "I came from *Iburwa* or

Ibutwa.” Mundu is said to have emerged from a certain hole on that mountain.

According to some of the elders, Mundu must have come from the north-east, presumably Ethiopia, during the mass migration of various tribes in attempting to escape conflict. The tribe passed through Kenya via Kitale until they arrived and settled around Mount Elgon. Mundu had two offspring, both of them boys, named Masaaba and Kundu. The latter and his wife Nambozo plus their cattle found it necessary to migrate from their place of origin. The descendants of Kundu are said to have taken the western direction to unknown lands, and from this legend the Bagisu believe that Kundu disappeared.

Masaaba, the elder son of Mundu, is said to have had three boys and a daughter called Nagudi. The boys were Mwambu Lubayo, Mubuuya and Wanaale. The parents and their children lived on the mountain for a long time, but later they were forced to come down from the mountain because of volcanic activities.

Mwambu Lubayo and his descendants occupied the Budadiri and Bulambuli counties of the district. Mubuuya and his descendants moved to occupy the Bubulo and Manjiya counties of the district. Wanaale and his

descendants now occupy Bungokho county of the same district. Nagudi married a man named Goonyi, who is said to have been a Maasai captive of the Masaaba family.

As the descendants of Masaaba multiplied, they spread over present-day Mbale District, felling the forest and carving out fields and gardens for themselves and for their children. There is no tradition indicating that the Bagisu found any other tribe or race dwelling in this area. In recent years other peoples such as the Babukusu of Western Kenya joined the Bagisu in the region as they gradually spread eastwards, southwards, northwards, westwards and to other areas, including the plains. The expansion westwards and southwards into the plains and the extension to the north-east into Kapchorwa District (Sebei) today, was a slow and simple penetration into zones which had no inhabitants.

Social Organization

The Bagisu have a social structure that is distinguished by three different levels of institutions: the age grade (*magoji*), the clan (*kyika*) and the neighborhoods (*maduli*). Each of these institutions has a specific function.

The Age Grade (*Magoji*)

These age groups range from 1-5 years apart and are comprised of men

born during a particular period. At the age of about 18-20, they are circumcised together. Women have no age grades but join the age grades of their husbands. Within each age grade there are two subdivisions of seniority, corresponding to the period of circumcision. Those who take the rite in August and those who participate in the rite in December of the same year belong to the same age group. Each age group has its nickname relating to the commemoration of an event that occurred at the time of birth or circumcision. Occasionally the nickname could relate to some idiosyncrasy of the members of the age group.

These age groups regulate the military, political and marital status of the tribe. During their prime years they organize military bands which protect the elderly, women and children. Each band has a leader who earns his status based on his accomplishments in either warfare or other acts of creativity e.g., song or dance. He is the tactician and the most brave in the age group. Politically the age group ensures that there is harmony within the tribe. Members work hand in hand with clan leaders. They also enforce the norms of the tribe, such as not permitting a man to marry from his clan or the daughter of his age group.

The Clan (*Kyiguga*)

The Bagisu tribe is believed to have descended from Masaaba. Out of this single lineage come the major divisions and subdivisions known as *kyiguga* (of the grandfather) (singular), or *biguga* (of the grandfathers) (plural). Each *kyiguga* is known almost exclusively by its ancestral name. Gisu, for instance, was the name of a man, but since he was head of a lineage, a prefix *Ba* is placed to signify “the people of.” Bagisu are the people of Gisu. *Kyiguga* is the clan, and as time goes on, this subdivides into sub-clans, (*zinda*) but all can trace their lineage to Masaaba, the father of the Bagisu. Although unequal in size, the clans are equal in status. All those clan members are *balebe* (relatives) and know one another by name. Marriage is prohibited among members of the same clan. Visiting among members is common to enhance relationships (*bulebe*). Each clan has a totem which gives it an identity and a philosophy of life. For example, the totem for the Nagami clan is a deer. The Nagami are fast runners, presumably because they derive inspiration from their totem. There is a mystical connection between the totem and the members of the clan. Consequently it is anathema for the members of the Nagami clan to eat deer meat.

Even though now the tribe is very large, most people can trace their

lineage back four to five generations. These clans generally stay together because they are tied to the land and to the ancestors, and although modern development has led to migrations, these ties continue to hold. The dead are buried on their ancestral land. Bodies are transported from wherever the Bagisu die to be buried at home. The living value their dead relatives whom they consider to be part of their lives. The attention given to a proper burial shows the importance of ancestors in the Bagisu culture.

Ancestors, referred to as the *Bakulu* "the important ones," are highly revered by the Bagisu. Ancestors are part of the Bagisu families and they influence the events of the clan. Ancestors have sacred places of contacts such as *bisayiro* (shrines), *ingani* (graves), and sometimes special trees and rocks. These sacred places are visited only during ritual activities, usually carried out by the male members of the clan, though occasionally especially when fertility rites are performed, female members participate as well. Ancestors communicate their wishes to their relatives via dreams.

The living keep food and drink beside the sacred places of contact. The respondents in the study said they were not sure whether the ancestors actually eat and drink. The informants said that food and drink are symbolic of good will and respect, but are never consumed, because ancestors are

disembodied spirits. Each time food and drink are placed at these sacred sites ancestors are addressed with words like, *Kubalomba mufugirire bihanwa bino; nanye mukubere mukulinde ni babana mukabaziznisa dawwe.*

"We entreat you to accept these gifts; in turn we know you will be kind to us and our children, and not harm them."

There are cases of affliction from ancestral spirits, particularly when the living relatives have forgotten them. In such cases, diviners are consulted and the appropriate propitiation is made to divert the affliction. It must be pointed out, however, that afflictions are rare. The good by far outweighs the bad so that the disposition of the majority of the Bagisu toward their ancestors is a happy one. The rituals which are performed routinely during the life cycle give the living an opportunity to get in touch with their ancestors.

It is the responsibility of each clan member to perpetuate the clan name. Their members may be scattered geographically but their identity is maintained. Though distant from each other, at the death of a clan member, the entire clan members gather at the funeral. This rite and others like circumcision and naming ceremonies are occasions for the clan to gather.

Clans have no political or administration role as such. These roles are

played by the age grades and the *maduli*. The principle that children and property are clan assets is embedded in the system. Each member of the clan has the responsibility to instruct and discipline children and, in some cases, women. It is a collective responsibility to ensure that the norms of the tribe are enforced. It is everyone's duty to ensure that endogamous marriages within the clan do not occur.

Neighborhoods (*Maduli*)

The word *maduli* refers to the whole neighborhood, its council of elders and the place where the council meets. At the heart of *maduli* is the concern for cooperation that is necessary for coexistence. Members of the *maduli* are not necessarily from the same clan. One does not have a choice in the matter of membership. The location of one's house determines which *maduli* a person belongs to.

The *maduli* is the most significant political and judicial unit of the tribe. There is no separate political entity that exists above the *maduli*. Problems within the family are dealt with by the family unit, but the problems of civil control and administration are handled by the *maduli*.

The governing body of each *maduli* is its council of elders. The council members acquire their place by seniority and personality. They

should possess leadership qualities that are obvious to the members of the community. This is unlike the kin structure where leadership is based on seniority alone.

At the family level, decisions are made by the husband. At the clan level, the elders (*babami*) make decisions, and within age groups, decisions are made by the leaders, but at the *maduli* level, the leadership council deliberates on the issues until a consensus is reached. The decisions by these leaders are to be accepted by members of the *maduli* without question, and whatever is decided upon becomes binding to all the members. These leaders deal predominantly with traditional issues such as land rights, witchcraft, and adultery. Matters pertaining to the law of Uganda are dealt with by government -- appointed chiefs and the police.

In addition to settling problems of common concern to the neighborhood, the functions of the *maduli* leaders include the allocating of land for cultivation and overseeing religious ceremonies. A key characteristic of the *maduli* is a strong sense of unity and mutual responsibility which cut across the entire clan and tribal loyalties. This pattern is exemplified in labor. Each family is responsible for their own farm, but voluntary cooperation known as *bibaga* is common. Two or three families team up to till the land or

harvest in one family's farm on a rotational basis. Meals and local brew are served after completion of the work. Entertainment is part of this process; drums and other musical instruments are played, accompanied by dance. These activities of work and leisure serve to encourage and strengthen relationships within the *maduli*.

Customs of the Bagisu

Like any other tribe in Africa, the Bagisu have traditions and customs concerning land preservation, traditional religion and beliefs, witchcraft practices, marriage, and circumcision. Some customs have vanished; some are on the verge of diminishing as modern changes come in; others, however, are still being practiced vigorously. Male circumcision is one of the strongest customs to which, because of its significance, a sizable amount of space will be devoted.

Circumcision Rite (*Ipalu*)

The Bagisu people talk widely about circumcision everywhere and all the time, particularly in the even years when the ceremony takes place. It appears that the rite of circumcision stands supreme in the Bagisu culture. The custom is called by the name of the knife used during the circumcision operation, *Ipalu*. The literal meaning of *Ipalu* is "big knife," but in fact the

knife used for the operation is quite small. The knife seems big because of the terrible pain the candidate feels during the operation. As the operation is carried out, the candidate experiences intense pain, which according to the Bagisu is beyond description, but the candidate is not supposed to show any fear or make any sign of emotion, not even to blink his eyes. For the candidate, the operation seems to take a year, although modern circumcisers take hardly a minute to perform it. Regardless of the time taken by the operator, the intensity of pain remains the same for the candidate, and despite this anguish, the majority of candidates have always withstood it courageously.

Many and varied stories exist regarding the origin of this custom among the Bagisu. According to one well-known story, Funya son of Mukhama of Bamutoto sub clan of Bungokho sub county in Central Mbale county, unexpectedly met Nabarwa, a Maasai girl, and decided to marry her. It was not long before Nabarwa found out that Funya was uncircumcised. She told him that if he wanted to become her permanent husband he had to become a real man, which could only be through circumcision. They both went to Nabarwa's home, where Funya was voluntarily circumcised according to Maasai traditional customs. After Funya had healed, the newly

married couple happily returned to Bumutoto and started their own home.

It happened that one day Funya's brother-in-law Aramunyenyeye (or Munyanya as he was later called by the Bagisu), visited his sister Nabarwa and her husband Funya. He found that his three nephews were on the verge of death. He told their parents that unless the boys were traditionally circumcised and treated, they would perish in their youth. Funya and Nabarwa allowed Aramunyenyeye to circumcise his three nephews. During their convalescence, he fed them so luxuriously that by the time the new men were healed, they had gained weight and looked very fresh and ready to begin a new life as adults. This action not only pleased Funya and his wife, but also their neighbors, who dared to follow it. Gradually, the custom spread throughout the whole tribe of Bagisu which includes Mango's descendants of Western Kenya, the Babukusu.

The Process of the Rite. The process of the circumcision rite suggests circumcision among the Bagisu is very significant. It is planned gradually and systematically, implying its seriousness and importance. As life is a gradual process, so is *ipalu* among the people who have voluntarily accepted it.

Traditionally each clan organized their own circumcision ceremonies. These clan-organized ceremonies took a very long time to come to an end,

and consequently a lot of people's time and property were spent. In 1950 the Bugisu District Administration stepped in and organized the program according to sub counties beginning with Bamutoto, the fathers of the custom, and each county celebrates the initiation on specified days in the following order: Bungokho, Bubulo, Manjiya, Budadiri, and finally Bulambuli.

Three stages precede the actual circumcision, beginning with a preparatory dance called *isonja*. After the *isonja* relatives and friends are visited to tell them formally that their boy is a candidate for circumcision. The intensity of dancing increases as the time of the operation nears. The last stage in the preparation of the ritual involves cleaning sacred groves and building new shrines. Then at the sacred site the elders of the clan invoke blessings from the ancestors upon the candidates, blessings that not only guarantee the help of the ancestors during the ritual but also in the lives of the initiates.

The day of circumcision dawns with anxiety and anticipation. It begins with the continuation of dancing, singing, and drumming the night before. Goats and chickens are slaughtered in large numbers. The animals' hearts and lungs are stuck on sticks placed in the courtyards where the operation is due to take place. The entrails of the animals are carefully

examined and studied by the experts for omens. The contents of the stomachs are smeared on the candidate's face, belly, and legs by selected elders. The actual physical operation of the candidates' foreskins makes it the greatest day in two years in each sub-community of the district.

The initiates receive teachings on the customs of the Bagisu and the duties expected of adult men. The new man is expected to be polite, responsible, determined, brave, and industrious. He should get married very soon after the cure in order to beget more sons and daughters to perpetuate the clan, the tribe and the nation and, most of all, to keep the custom going. He is instructed to remain faithful and obedient. He must never steal anyone's property. At this juncture the initiate carefully listens to all the instructions but without question or response. The initiate may be smeared with millet yeast on his head, belly and face in order to appear distinct from the rest of the people.

There are other formalities which are followed subsequently before the candidates are taken to their respective places of operation. Coming to the selected place of ordeal, the candidate is made to stand upright and very firmly on the prepared sack. He holds a stick across his shoulders. Immediately the foreskin of his penis is cut off. The people watching shout at

once, "*O bakhwonaga!*" literally translated as, "They have spoiled you!" but which actually means "You have been cut now!" There are always two circumcisers; one stands on the left and the other on the right. The one who does the cutting is called *umuhambi* while the other who holds the candidate is called *umubinjilili*.

The *umuhambi* then circumcises down the line as fast and yet as accurately as he can. The candidate is, of course, expected to stand absolutely still, looking in one direction in front of him. He must not show in any way that he is feeling pain at that critical moment of the operation, not even blinking his eyes. While the operation is going on, the spectators keep shouting, some pointing their sticks or fingers in the direction of the eyes or in the face of the candidate. Some men blow whistles or horns directly in the ears of the candidate. The whole atmosphere around the place of operation is imbued with all sorts of noises, worries, expectations, excitement, anxiety, pity and joy. No sooner is the operation successfully ended than the encouraging noises and hullabaloo cease, but the drumming and ululations continue for some time to show that the candidate has firmly withstood the pain. Gifts and money are offered to the successful initiate. He is now declared *umusani*, a man.

Should the candidate show fear at the time of operation, he would be the butt of ridicule among all the people -- men and women, boys and even girls. Songs of ridicule are composed after the incident, bringing shame to the clan for generations. A fine is also imposed. Because of this, the entire clan attempts to strengthen the candidate by giving gifts.

Topical Circumcisional Names (*Gamenjilo*)

Every even year of circumcision in Mbale District has a topical name which is given according to what actually takes place that year -- a significant event worthy to be remembered. For example, the topical name for 1964 is *umuinga*, meaning the chief of chiefs, because that was the first time in the history of the Bagisu to have the Constitutional and Ceremonial Head, the first and the last such head of the district and tribe. The informants traced such names as far back as 1901. This does not mean that circumcision among the Bagisu started that year, but that is the extent of available information. It should be noted that different areas give different topical names for the same year's initiation. This is especially true in Bungokho, Bubulo, Budadiri, and Manjiya Counties. Between 1901 and 1917 circumcision usually took place in odd years, but this arrangement was changed to even years in 1920 because there had been great famine between 1918 and 1919, and therefore it

was not possible for circumcision to take place. The odd years allow the boys a time to mature into proper candidates and reflect on their readiness to undergo the operation.

Examples of Topical Circumcisional Names. Following is the record of the topical names from 1960, when Honorable Y. B. Mung'oma was elected the first representative to the Legislative Council (*Legico*) by the Bugisu District Council (*Lukhobo*). In honor of the event, the circumcision rite for that year was known by this name. All the initiates of 1960 are referred to as *Legico*.

In 1962, two events were significant. The circumcision ceremony takes place in August and December of each even year. When there is an event before August, those candidates are referred to by that event. Such was the case in 1962. The August initiates were called *Cha-cha-cha*. It was a period when the girls and town women wore very short dresses far above their knees called by that name. Also a new type of ballroom dance called by the same name was introduced in Uganda. During the year, Uganda attained its political independence from Great Britain on October 9. The December initiates were named *Uhuru*, the Swahili word for Independence.

In 1964, Bugisu District Council had its own Constitutional or

Ceremonial Head, the first ever. He was Honorable Y. B. Mung'oma, who was also the last such Head. The initiates were known as *Umuinga*, a Lugisu title for the Constitutional Head.

In 1966, the uncircumcised old men who had evaded the ritual were forcibly circumcised. The Bagisu constitution stipulates that every male Mugisu must be circumcised and empowers the Bagisu to use force to circumcise any male member who refuses to undergo the ritual. In that year all uncircumcised members of the Bagisu tribe were rounded up and circumcised. They were referred to as *Muhambe*, the "caught ones".

Drums were not used during the circumcision ceremony until 1968 when they were introduced. The initiates and their companions were accompanied by drums (*Zing'oma*). The initiates were known as *Nang'oma* meaning, "of the drums".

In 1970, landslides occurred in various parts of the upper areas of Bugisu. Human dwellings and people were washed down hills, buried by the earth, never to be seen again. The initiates of that year were known by the event, *Ikhulurwe*, translated "landslide".

Another significant event in 1970 occurred when the East African countries changed from Imperial Weights and Measures to the Metric

System, i.e. from pounds and ounces to kilograms and grams, from yards and inches to kilometers and meters. The initiates were referred to as *Kilo*.

The initiates of 1972 are known as *Nabaindi* translated "Indians", after the expulsion from Uganda of the non-Ugandan British Asians and the nationals of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh by Idi Amin Dada, then the President of Uganda.

In 1974, due to the scarcity of essential commodities in Uganda, the population was forced to line up if they wanted to obtain commodities from the shops or when booking for a bus or train, to ensure orderliness. The initiates of that year were called *Nanyiriri*, translated "lines".

By 1976, the economic situation in Uganda was out of control. People from Bugisu had to walk to Kenya carrying coffee on their heads to obtain essential commodities. It was a year of unauthorized business practice, hoarding of goods, and overcharging. The initiates were known as *Weyodera*, translated "looking for oneself".

Two years later, Uganda nationals who had gone into exile mobilized an army to fight against Idi Amin. The liberation war was launched from Tanzania in 1978 which led to the overthrow of Idi Amin Dada. The initiates were known as *Saba Saba*, a type of bomb that presumably was used to

overthrow Amin.

Uganda is known for its fertility and good weather, which are conducive to good crop production. Among the crops which do very well are bananas. The average person could afford to buy a full bunch from the market. But in 1980, bananas in the market became so costly that people had to buy banana clusters from the markets instead of full bunches. The 1980 initiates were therefore referred to as *Nabisasi*, translated "clusters".

In 1982, the initiates all over the district sang songs with the word *makang'a*, meaning "very old woman". Also, that year young men preferred old women for marriage to the young ones who had become expensive. Thus the initiates for the year earned the name *Makang'a*.

From 1984 the Opening Blessing of the initiates took place at Bumutoto, the birth place of circumcision, instead of Malukhu, the District Headquarters, where it had taken place traditionally. The initiates were called by the birth place of the ceremony, *Bumutoto*.

The initiates of 1986 are known as *Museveni* after the National Resistance Army (N. R. A.) led by President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni took over Uganda from former President Tito Okello Lutwa, who had overthrown President Milton Obote's second government six months earlier.

In 1988, Alice Lakwena became the first Ugandan woman to lead men in guerrilla warfare from Northern Uganda in a bid to overthrow the Museveni Government. She later fled to neighboring Kenya where she was granted political asylum. The initiates are called by her name, *Lakwena*.

Following the earthquake which wrecked most parts of East Africa in 1990, the initiates were referred to as *Musisi*, translated "earthquake".

In 1992 the Uganda government launched an attack on tax defaulters, deploying tax patrols throughout the country. Chiefs in every district collected revenue for the government from this exercise. The initiates were known as *Napotolo*, translated "tax patrols".

Last, in 1994 the Uganda government introduced the Value Added Tax (V. A. T.) on all imported goods. The officers who collected revenue from traders were equipped with Mitsubishi *Pajero* four-wheel-drive vehicles. These vehicles were known for their speed in giving chase to any trader who dodged the V.A.T. road blocks. With the *Pajeros* all over Uganda, the initiates of 1994 were known as *Pajero*.

Importance of Circumcision

This custom is so important to the Bagisu that it calls for comment. It is true that circumcision among the Bagisu is very painful because the

operation is performed without anesthesia. The expenses incurred in preparation for this rite are proportionally large, but the Bagisu perpetuate this custom for the following reasons:

First, it is a custom of long tradition, almost synonymous with the history of the tribe, and has been widely accepted and firmly established. Since it is the main distinguishing feature of the Bagisu, no one can just stop it. It has become the hallmark of the tribe, and as such it is at the heart of their culture. The Kalenjin tribe of Uganda is the only other tribe which practices this custom, but not, however, with the kind of pomp as among the Bagisu. In neighboring Kenya several tribes practice the custom as well.

Second, circumcision symbolizes the unification of the Bagisu. The moral code of the Bagisu is bound up with this custom. During circumcision time, normal sanctions are lifted in many areas: sexual relations, taking people's property, eating, drinking and dancing.

Third, circumcision periods serve as the basis for counting time. The legends and the history of the Bagisu are remembered and explained according to the names of the circumcision periods. Important events in the life of the Bagisu are remembered that way. This is illustrated by the Topical Circumcision Names (*Gamenjilo*) above.

Last, the custom gives a boy the status of manhood in his community and hence the right of ownership, marriage and free participation in the social activities of his people.

Other Customs and Rituals

Space has been devoted to the circumcision custom because of its importance to the Bagisu. The Bagisu, however, have other customs that equally involve ritual activity. For instance, seasonal rituals are important to the Bagisu especially at planting and harvesting times. The two ceremonies for planting and harvesting are performed by an elder of the clan. The seed is placed in the ancestral shrines overnight before sowing. The next morning the elder pronounces ritual words over the seeds. No sacrifice is necessary. The first-fruits of the harvest are always brought to the shrines and then all can feast.

Some Bagisu rituals occur in response to a crisis and require sacrifice. Men, usually elders and priests, officiate. Some of the items for Bagisu rituals include the invocation accompanying (1) a goat (*imbusi*), (2) a white or black fowl (*ingoko*), and (3) beer (*busera*) with an invocation. Bagisu rituals typically require an animal sacrifice, either a goat or a fowl. Beer accompanies the animal sacrifice as a libation to invoke blessings. The

animal or fowl may be killed or presented alive to the ancestors or divinities and spirits. The names of the ancestors of that lineage are recited during the ceremony. Specific spirits are also named depending on the crisis. All this takes place in a homestead where male members of the clan congregate.

Head shaving is common in all ceremonies related to life cycle. Rarely are female members involved in this process, and participants are limited strictly to members of the clan. They then feast on the meat and beer, and all the sacrificial meat must be consumed. The spitting of beer (*kubida*) is said to induce fertility, to assure one of success and protection from evil for it is a sign of good will. Clay of reddish color has a powerful symbolism because it is close to blood in color. It is also used during ceremonies such as circumcision in order to ensure fertility.

Every member of the Bagisu tribe has participated in ritual activity at one stage or another whether at birth, during the naming ceremony, during the initiation ceremony, marriage, or rites pertaining to death. For each stage in life there is an appropriate rite. For example, at birth the mother participates in the *kusaala* ritual to ensure safety during labor. As soon as the baby is born, if it is breech (*cinafuna*), the *kuhosa* ritual is performed. If it is twins (*bukwana*), the *kujeesa* ritual is observed. As soon as the baby is weaned,

the naming ceremony is carried out. Rituals mark the meaningful events in the lives of the Bagisu.

Naming Ceremony

The naming ceremony is called *kutyuka*. The purpose of the ceremony is not to determine the name of the child but to confirm it. Ancestors are honored by mentioning their names and inviting them to the feast.

Traditionally, the Bagisu call elders who have full knowledge of the dead from the side of both the husband and the wife. Animal sacrifices are necessary: for a baby boy a chicken is used, while for a baby girl a goat is used. These are dedicated to the ancestors (*bakulu*). Traditional beer is thought to summon each dead relative. Each ancestor's name is called, and beer from a gourd is spat (*kubida*) on the chick or goat and on the baby. At the same time, a declaration (*tumbuka*), "be fertile", is pronounced.

After this process, there is a great celebration of goat meat and millet mealie meal, *busima bwe bulo*. The living share with the dead as the elders pour libation and also put goat or chicken meat and mealie meal across the fire place for the ancestors. Then they name the ancestors one by one to join them in the feast, underscoring the significance of a name among the Bagisu. Most of the Bagisu who have a tribal name have undergone this ceremony.

There are exceptions, however, as when the baby is named after a living person.

Child Crying

Related to the naming ceremony is the interpretation and handling of child crying. While all children do cry, excessive crying is not considered normal by the Bagisu. The Bagisu believe that the common cause of excessive crying is evil-eyed people, the majority of whom are women. This phenomenon is known as *Zilagani*, which is easy to cure. A particular herb by a local medicine woman is applied, or, if the person can be identified all the medicine woman does is hold the baby in her arms and utter some formula. Normally the baby will then cease to cry excessively, and no divination is necessary. However, should the baby continue to cry excessively, a diviner is approached. He/she then advises the parents as to which side of the family elders should come from to placate the unhappy ancestors. In some cases, the name given to the baby could be a wrong one, prompting the jealousy of the ancestors. Sometimes during the naming ceremony a particular ancestor's name could have been omitted unintentionally. That ancestor then "pinches" (*kubuda madete*) the baby to draw the attention of the parents of the baby. Whatever the cause, a right

name or additional mention of names is accompanied by the usual ceremonies of *kutyuka*, *kubida*, and *kutumbuka* followed by a feast. Once these are in place, the baby stops excessive crying.

Rituals of Defilement

Taboos are powerful deterrents of evil in the Bagisu tribe. Certain acts like incest and adultery are forbidden. Members of the tribe who go against these taboos become ritually unclean and are considered outsiders to the community. They may be afflicted with all kinds of misfortunes. To cleanse such a person from defilement, a sheep (*imbusi*) must be killed and the cud (*buse*) smeared on the person and his/her immediate family to protect them. Bits of cyme are thrown about in all directions of the compound with appropriate utterances to ward off evil and to break the power of the taboo. Unlike other rituals, the sheep is given to the ritual specialist as a fee for services. This specialist must be an elder from the defiled person's lineage. Incest among the Bagisu is defined as sexual relations with anyone from the same clan. It is an especially detestable act, and anyone who commits it incurs a curse. Usually the man receives the blame. The remedy must be by the restitution and cleansing process described above. In this case, however, the sheep must be black and must be accompanied by a white chicken as a

sacrifice to the ancestors. After this ceremony is completed, the man is accepted into the community. Until the cleansing ritual is performed, the man is considered an outcast, the worst form of punishment a Bagisu man can be given. Even then he will always be remembered as one who committed such a grievous act. Women formulate songs associating the man with the act; by so doing members of the man's family and the community at large are always reminded of the gravity of incest. Also during important rites the man is never asked to take an active role; he is marginalized for life.

Another common taboo involves adultery. It is tolerated as long as it is done in secret. In fact, men take pride in committing adultery; however, it is very risky. When the adulterer falls into the hands of the woman's husband, it may cost him his life. Killing such a person by the husband of the wife is justified by the tradition. But if death does not occur, the man has to compensate his act with a black sheep. Following that, a cleansing ritual is performed as described above. Adultery is more common than incest. Both are considered abominations and involve ritual defilement. Therefore a ritual of cleansing is required in order for such persons to remain part of the community.

Death Among the Bagisu

Among the Bagisu a natural death is only applicable to very old people (70 years and over) and when a very old man or woman dies, there is a great celebration. But the death of a young person (0-60 years) is regarded as the act of an enemy. The death of a young person must be determined by consulting the diviner and avenged in order to prevent further deaths in that family. As the death of a young man or woman is not believed to be natural, it is considered a disaster to lose a young person. When older folks die, the understanding is that they will be ancestors in a position to assist the living relatives. Prescribed rituals are followed meticulously in order to make it possible for ancestors to be accepted on the other side of the river where the dead initially go.

Funerals are handled by male members who are related to the deceased except in the case of a miscarriage when only women related to the woman who has miscarried carry out the task. Funerals are ritual acts which are done to prevent the intrusion of evil spirits which may have been responsible for the death. Broken pots, plates and cups which were used by the deceased are placed on the tomb for symbolic use in the next life. Goats are slaughtered for those who die at a very old age. It is believed that the spirit of the goats

will go with the deceased in the next life. Therefore the wealth of the deceased in the after life is determined by how many goats are slaughtered on the funeral day. There is plenty to eat; every mourner is expected to feast joyfully as a happy send off for the deceased. It is strongly believed that what the family does on this side of death is also done on the other side of death.

In case of an old man's funeral, a ritual for that man's widow is performed by the elders. She must have her hair shaved, wear a mourning necklace, and put on mourning garments (*gomesi ye gumukono gwonyene*). She stays indoors for about three months mourning her husband, is surrounded by immediate relatives of the deceased. After the period of mourning she is free to go out and begin a normal life. Traditionally she becomes the wife of one of the deceased's brothers (*bamwisa mwanu*). She can only be married to an outsider when none of the clan members will marry her. The children are considered the deceased man's and are entitled to an inheritance from the wealth of the deceased. This custom is similar to the levirate marriage among the ancient Israelites.

Religious Specialists

Misfortune is experienced by the Bagisu as it is in other societies. In

order to avert it or discover the source of it, diviners must be consulted.

There is no such thing as an accident in the Bagisu worldview.

Diviners

Diviners can be men or women and they are called *bafumu* in Lugisu language, but due to the Baganda influence they are also called *balaguzi* (the healers). They reveal the cause(s) of misfortune experienced by the inquirer and prescribe a remedy. These remedies include herbs, charms, and ritual activities. Ritual activities are part of the divination process, both during and after the consultation.

There are three types of diviners. In the first category are those whose powers are derived from the ancestral lineage. Ancestors are known as *bakhulu* (the important ones), but a distinction is made between those who died a long time ago and those who died recently. The former are called *bamagombe* (ghosts of those who died long ago, i.e., five or more generations); the latter, *basambwa*, the spirits of those still remembered by the living. The former are mainly malevolent, the latter predominantly benevolent. Traditional diviners operate by ancestral divinational powers known as *gimisambwa*. A common feature of these diviners involves the rhythmic shaking of gourds in which dry maize seeds are placed. The

shaking is accompanied by singing which entreats the ancestors to reveal the cause of the problem in question. When performing divinational acts, they dress in goat skin decorated with cowrie shells. The *gimisambwa* have families and otherwise lead a normal life; they only withdraw from the public when clients visit their shrine, which is not accessible to ordinary people except during consultation. Most clans have this kind of diviner.

In the second category are diviners identified among the Bagisu as *badyuli*, and these purchase divinational powers for commercial purposes. They do not have a family tradition of divination. They purchase these divinational powers from distant lands, and in applying these powers, the *badyuli* use the language of origin of the powers. The two common languages used are Swahili, from the Coast Province of Kenya, and Luganda from Buganda.

The *badyuli* perform extraordinary acts like walking on coals of fire with bare feet or lying on sharp thorns but without harm. They are the professional diviners and the most expensive of the three types. Their apparatus includes a special knobbed stick (*ipimbo*) and a horn (*mayembe*), both containing magical powers. These instruments are used to detect where substances of sorcery have been placed by enemies.

The following account exemplifies the work of the *badyuli*: A Christian man in Bumasiwa area had been plagued by a chronic illness. His relatives had consulted several diviners but had not received much help. They learned from relatives who had experienced a similar situation that there was a diviner thirty-five miles away who had assisted them. The family members visited this very experienced and powerful diviner. Upon arrival in the compound of the bed-ridden man, the diviner summoned substances of sorcery from a notorious sorcerer's hut. These substances were described as what appeared to be balls of dung (*zimbililishhe*). It is believed that once they rot, the person who has been bewitched dies as well. This prompts most Bagisu to consult diviners as soon as there is a sickness. The earlier these substances of sorcery are detected and destroyed, the better. In this case the patient, though a Christian, had little to do with divination but his concerned relatives consulted the diviner on his behalf, and he was cured of his illness. This Christian's response to this experience is unknown.

The third category is *basilaamu*, the Muslim diviners who give a reading by interpreting passages from the Quran, read auguries divined by sacrificing chickens and by throwing cowrie shells like dice. According to the *basilaamu*, by the configuration of shells scattered on the mat the diviner

can detect the cause of the problem. Another method used is to float in water objects which, after settling to the bottom, indicate the cause of the problem.

All three types of diviners are respected in the community for the service they render. It must be noted that diviners play an important social role, fighting misfortune. Traditional diviners in Bumasifwa and Buginyanya areas were baptized Christians. They were not, however, active in church. They attended church only on Easter and Christmas days, when most nominal Christians attend.

While the diviners are respected generally by the Bagisu, some individuals are disappointed by the results of divination. They say diviners do not give specific information, especially when the problem is related to people, i.e., witchcraft. They divine by leading questions, e.g., “Did you have a quarrel recently?” “Did you resolve the conflict with the person?” If the answer is in the negative, the diviner uses this clue to diagnose the source of the problem. Because of this practice among some diviners, the Bagisu refer to all diviners as *balimba* or *bahombisi*, meaning those who cannot be trusted entirely. Ironically, the Bagisu still have a high regard for diviners, and the nature of one’s problem determines which type of diviner one consults.

Witchcraft and Sorcery

The Bagisu believe in both witchcraft and sorcery. They do not distinguish between them, calling both *bulosi*. The practitioners of witchcraft and sorcery are called *balosi*. *Bulosi* is the act of bewitching through an object or a spell or a combination of the two. It is not uncommon for food which has been dropped to be used by a *balosi* for purposes of *bulosi*. *Bulosi* can also be traced to two sources: inheritance or purchase. There are two types of *bulosi*. The first (*kubina*) causes temporary illness, including periods of infertility; and the second (*kuloga*) causes death. *Kubina* necessitates an object to facilitate the process of *bulosi*. *Kubina* is inherited in general but can be contracted by an individual who associates with *kubina*. This possibility is reflected in the Bagisu saying, *kujenda nu mubini nawe wikola umubini* ("being in the company of a witch is a sure way to become one"). *Kubina* is easier to undo. *Kuloga* is more sophisticated and does not require objects. A high degree of expertise is required to engage in *kuloga*. It takes spectacular moves like the *balosi* flying through the night to do harm. It is instant and usually unseen. It is always fatal as there is no time to counteract it. Sorcerers purchase their powers from other sorcerers or have special sources for their power, like coastal regions. Mombasa, situated along the

East African coast, is known as a source for *bulosi*. It takes a diviner to detect the location of the substance of sorcery to free the victim. With the more serious and life threatening *bulosi*, a great deal of money may be spent to correct the situation. Consequently, *balosi* are greatly feared since they have the capacity to harm people. *Bulosi* is viewed as anti-social and is counter-productive.

Evil-Eye

Although it is commonly thought people exercise the evil-eye due to jealousy, this is not necessarily true in every case. The researcher witnessed an incident when his younger brother was about two years old and a healthy toddler. Whenever an evil-eyed person came around, our mother motioned to us to hide our little brother in the house. This was rather hard for us because we preferred playing around with our friends rather than hiding from the evil-eyed person. One day an evil-eyed woman came by our home, and while we were playing with our friends she performed *bulosi* on my healthy little brother. This was discovered in the evening when my brother came down with a very high fever. Our mother soon realized what had happened. When she confronted us with the question as to whether a particular evil-eyed woman had passed by and our answer was in the affirmative, she had no time

to lose. She rushed to the evil-eyed woman's house and to our amazement the woman admitted that her evil powers had affected our little brother but without her knowledge. She then took my brother in her arms and made some ritualistic utterances, from which in about ten minutes the boy returned to normal. From this incident it could be said that not all *balosi* are motivated by jealousy. The point, however, is that *balosi* are anti-social persons dreaded by the entire community because of the harm they bring.

Herbalists

While the *balosi* harm the community, medical practitioners and rain-makers assist the community. These herbalists among the Bagisu are common people and include Christians who use herbs to cure some sickness without ritual techniques attached to their use. These medical practitioners only ask for a little gift of appreciation, rather than charge a high fee. They do not advertise their herbs or services.

Rain-making (*Umugimbi*)

This term is misleading, as it depicts only one aspect of the function. The more appropriate term would be "rain-controller" because not only does the *Umugimbi* make rain, but also he stops excessive rain. Another function of a rain controller is to send thunderstorms to destroy the property of a

particular person or lineage, which is usually done for a fee. Rain-controllers can also withhold rain to enforce their demands or to punish those who have slighted them.

Though not common, the *umugimbi* has been known to climb Mount Elgon to entreat *Were* (God) for rain in time of drought. A black ox (*iyohu*) and a huge pot (*inyingu*) of beer are taken up to the mountain by several elders of the tribe who accompany the rain-maker. The ox is killed and eaten by all in the group, leaving only one leg which together with blood is offered to *Were* (God). The rain-maker takes the leg to the sacred pool out of which flows streams of water which serve the Bagisu. The beer is sacrificed to *Were*, and the huge pot is then filled with water from the sacred pool and set on top of the mountain. It is believed the water in that pot brings rain without fail. The informants confessed that this information was provided by older folks. Most younger people have not witnessed this phenomenon although they firmly believe it is true. However, there has not been a need in Bugisu in recent years to call for rain-making.

Summary

What emerged from this research is the interrelatedness of the spirit world and the events in this life. The Bagisu beliefs and practices have

developed in response to this interplay. All areas of life have a reference to the spirit world. For example, when a child is sick it may be that the ancestors are not happy or that some jealous person has bewitched him or her or that some evil spirit has attacked the child or perhaps the parents may have broken a taboo. A diviner must be consulted to determine precisely the cause of the sickness. Treatment may involve herbs, charms and some form of ritual activity depending on the nature of the problem. Whether it has to do with the loss of a job or the failure of crops, some spiritual entity must be involved. Perhaps there have been quarrels with the neighbors who respond by ruining one's economic situation by means of witchcraft. Thus daily life for the Bagisu is interwoven with the spiritual entities.

CHAPTER 3

The African and Biblical Spirit World

Africans, like all peoples, have their own worldview in which assumptions about how they perceive reality are shared by members of the group. Central to the African worldview is the spirit world inhabited by good, neutral, and evil spirits that affect the lives of people. A person's enemies may use sorcery and evil spirits to harm him or her. Protection from such attacks can be found through the help of specialists and ritual activity, making it possible to cope with such crises. The good and neutral spirits serve to bless the people. The relationship between these good and neutral spirits is also maintained through ritual activities prescribed by specialists who serve the community. Consequently diviners and elders of the clan who serve as priests occupy a place of honor in the African community.

Gamani (the equivalent of an Oceanic word *mana*) or life force is what permeates the universe, and *gamani* is what energizes the entire arrangement. Smith (1966:16) points out that *gamani* is "likened to an electrical fluid that could charge persons and things [objects], and be diverted from one [item] to another." He adds that *gamani* is "a mystical power over which only

specialists can manipulate for the harm or benefit of the living.”

Imasogie (1983:53) defines the African worldview as “concepts of the earth, man, his place on the earth, and his utilization of what he considers to be divinely ordained provisions for coping with the uncertainties of life, e.g., divination, sacrifices and protective charms or amulets.” Africans believe in spiritual forces which surround them. Their entire life is seen as a result of the interaction with these forces at whose mercy they exist (Imasogie 1983:66). For Africans, God is not directly involved in the world, but He provides means for people to use for their benefit. Shrines, diviners, and protective magical charms are seen as God-given provisions. Consequently no one feels guilty when utilizing these traditional means to solve problems.

Mbiti (1969:18) has observed that African religion is not prescribed by sacred writings but is found in the rituals, ceremonies, and festivals of the people. Central to the celebrations and events in the lives of individuals and the community are shrines, sacred places, and religious objects as Mbiti goes on to say: “At shrines and sacred places, people make or bring sacrifices and offerings, such as animals, fowls, food, utensils, tools, and coins. They also make prayers there. They regard such places as holy and sacred where people meet with God” (1975:19).

Traditionally in Africa, the entire community participates in such events as the birth of a child, the naming ceremony, initiation ceremonies, marriage, funerals, harvest festivals, praying for rain, and many others (Mbiti 1975:19; Zuesse 1979; Ray 1976; Smith 1929).

Mbiti has further noted that “African religion is also expressed in art and symbols” (1975:22) and the meaning of these symbols is generally understood by everyone, though some can only be interpreted by specialists. Some of the symbols and art which express religious ideas are marked on a person’s face or chest (Mbiti 1975:22). Music and dance are filled with religious content and have an important role in religious practices. Similarly proverbs, riddles, and wise sayings are a rich resource of religious beliefs, ideas, morals, and even warnings. These media entertain and even stimulate thinking as religious ideas and moral perspectives are expressed (Mbiti 1975:24). In addition, myths, legends, beliefs, and customs also express elements of African religion. Based on these examples, it seems appropriate to conclude that African religion influences and affects all areas of life. According to Mbiti (1975:27), “Africans are notoriously religious.” Religion is so interwoven with and embedded in the lives of Africans that religion and life are one. Parrinder (1962:9) has also noted that the greatest force ever in

Africa is the power of religion. He says that the old administrators in Africa were fond of commenting, "This incurably religious people," when they observed the pervasiveness of African religion. Kwesi Dickson elaborates what Mbiti and Parrinder have noted:

Religion is a regular accompaniment in a person's life; the chief's role, the relations between members of a society, morality, the stages in a person's life (birth, puberty, marriage, and death), the practice of medicine, architecture, warfare, traditional education, etc. -- all these areas are not disassociated from religion in the traditional African society. (1984:47)

From what has been said by these notable theologians, the African religious situation demands not only a God who is transcendent but also one who is immanent, one who is involved in the daily affairs of the people. What the African fears seems quite illogical to most Westerners, who might dismiss the African worldview as merely superstitious. It is at the point where the supernatural meets daily life that the divergence of worldviews between Africans and Westerners is most clearly evident.

These spirits and forces that surround humans in the African setting, namely good spirits, ancestors, evil spirits, and spiritual powers, are everywhere and are invisible but manifest themselves in human lives, activities, and the environment. As far as Africans are concerned, these spiritual forces exist in this world naturally. The Supreme Being is at the top

of the spiritual hierarchy or at the outer ring of the circle, followed by divinities, spirits of the dead, and finally, humans, who are at the center of reality along with plants, animals, and all other natural phenomena (Parrinder 1962:57). This view of the universe held by many people is similar to that which Whiteman (1985) has described as a biocosmic form of religion.

Some African scholars portray the African worldview as a triangle (see figure 5 below) in which human beings are at the center of the universe, surrounded by spiritual powers and beings to which they relate and which in turn influence and shape their lives. The Supreme Being is depicted as being located at the top of the triangle. On each side of the triangle are the divinities and the ancestral spirits or nature gods. At the bottom of the triangle are the magical and supernatural powers which can be utilized to prosper human beings and must be sustained by sacrifices and magical charms (Smith 1966:65; cf. Idowu 1973:12).

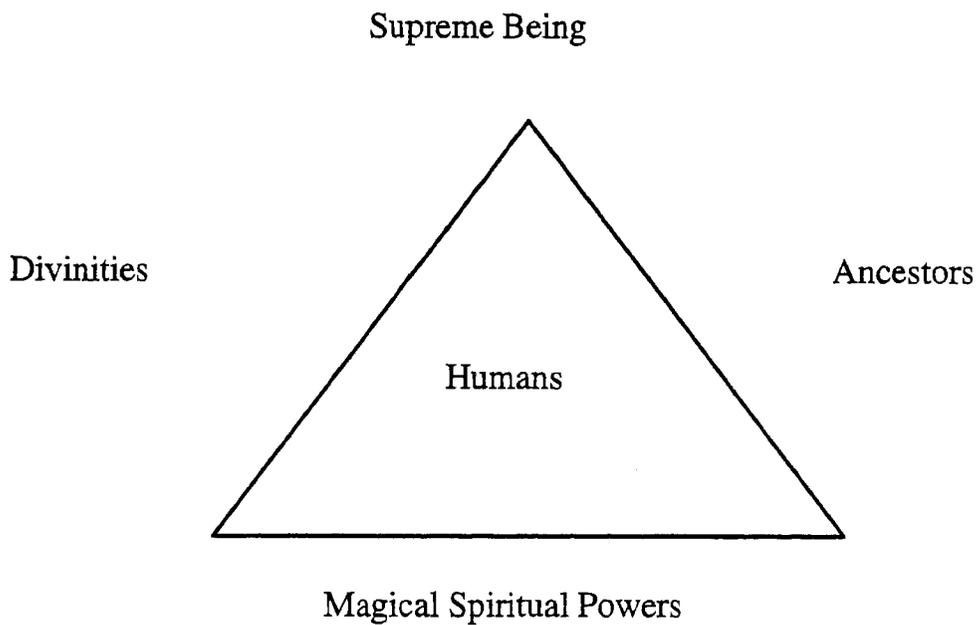


Figure 5: Humans in Relationship to the Supernatural in Bugisu

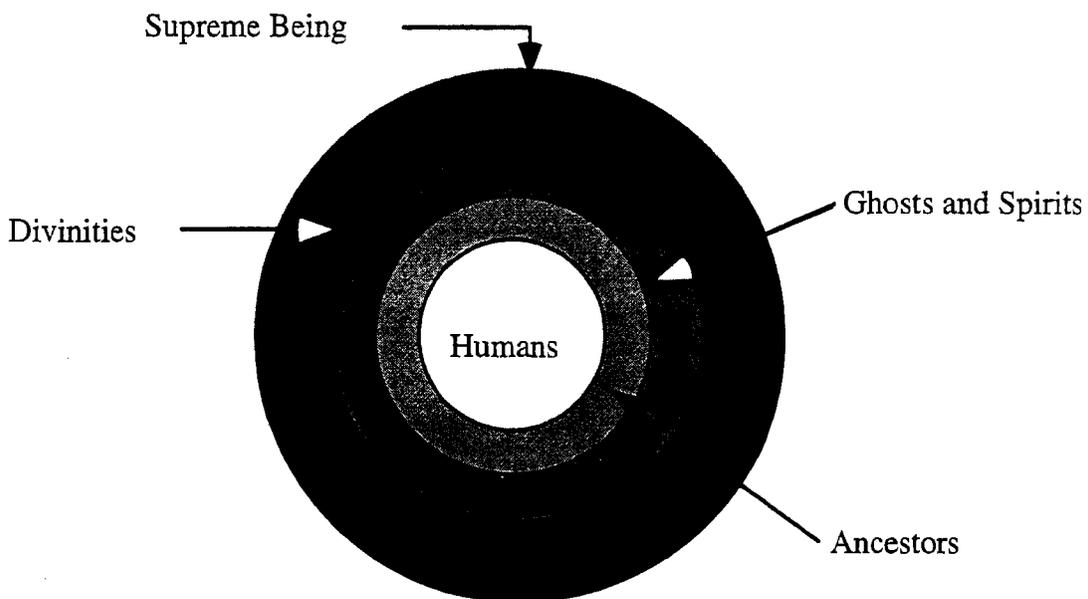


Figure 6: Humans in Relationship to the Bagisu Universe

Mbiti (1969:78) sees humans at the center of a circle (see figure 6 above) with God placed in an outer ring and with the ancestors placed in a ring adjacent to them. The argument for this arrangement is that humans call upon the ancestors, who draw close to humans in times of crises. However, whether one views the African universe as a triangle or as a circle, the results are the same, and whether it is viewed from a hierarchical or a circular perspective, the African cosmos is an entity filled with both visible and invisible beings and forces which interact for ill or for good. It is against this background that traditional spiritual specialists are present and prominent in Africa, for it is they who manipulate the *gamani* or spirits for the good of the population (Westerman 1937:841).

The African Understanding of Spirits

For the African, spirits could be good, neutral, or evil, and they are personal beings. They play an active role in the lives of the people and are dependent on the people's responses (Idowu 1973:179); they have power to restore or destroy, power for good or ill.

Interestingly, as strongly as these beliefs are held, no one is certain about the origin of spirits. As far as Africans are concerned, the activity of the spirits is what matters, not their origin. Nevertheless, it is generally

believed that they come from men and animals after death. While Idowu (1973:172) holds that they may also be created beings just like the divinities within the hierarchy of spirits, Mbiti (1969:25-26) insists that spirits are not created, and instead suggests that after an individual dies, the individual's spirit joins those of the ancestors. Mbiti further suggests that during the first four to five generations, a spirit can be identified as an ancestor and addressed by name and that beyond this period, it ceases to be in relationship with those on earth and might either be elevated to the status of a divinity or viewed simply as a ghost without identity. These ghosts are mainly malevolent and make up the bulk of evil spirits (Smith 1966:23).

The history of spirits is directly related to the history of humans; moreover, spirits dwell in the same geographical regions as humans. Spirits, according to African belief, are everywhere. There is no area of earth, no object or creature, which does not have a spirit of its own; locations of habitation include forests, rivers, lakes, mountains, and graveyards or any place of significant interest (Mbiti 1969:104; Smith 1966:23).

As in a biblical understanding, the African understanding of evil spirits is that they do not offer aid to mankind and ought to be resisted. These would fall in the category which the Apostle Paul identifies as principalities

and powers. Good spirits and ancestors, on the other hand, serve as intermediaries between humans and the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being is believed to be transcendent, far removed from humans, and beyond reproach. God can only intervene in the affairs of humans by means of the intermediaries, these intermediaries being the divinities and the spirits of the dead (Parrinder 1962:38).

Such an understanding of the cosmos creates in the African mind a sense of dependence upon these good spirits and a fear of the evil spirits which leads to a perpetual sense of insecurity. One needs the supernatural intervention which is readily available through involvement with good spirits and specialists. One taps into the supernatural by utilizing the available resources, namely, charms, magic, and medicine (Gehman 1989:69). Moreover, Africans believe that these resources are provisions from the Supreme Being. It is therefore a normal part of their lifestyle to consult those who have these resources. Since this is the Supreme Being's provision, there is no need for shame as long as the community approves of the act (Gehman 1989:69). In this respect, Edward G. Newing states:

Man lives in a community in a world in which he feels at home and into whose rhythm he fits. But it is also a world which brings terror and fear. In order that he may continually enjoy the good long life, many children, much food and wealth, great

respect . . . and ward off evil . . . sickness, barren wives, locust plagues, disrespect from the young, witchcraft . . . man must know the secrets of power or be able to consult those who have special skill in its manipulation for good or evil. (1975:41)

It is in this setting that Africans satisfy their spiritual dependence through regular rituals and from consultation with specialists (diviners, elders, priests, traditional healers, rain makers etc.). The Bagisu, for instance, understand that for one to attain prosperity and avoid misfortune, a positive relationship must be maintained with the spirits around them; this is done through careful, regular attendance to traditional rituals. Mbiti (1969:110-165) postulates that while rites of passage differ from one tribe to another among Africans, there is a commonality between them, that is, in general, all African peoples perform ritual ceremonies at birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Rituals are performed as well during periods of crisis. If a crisis develops which normal rituals seem unable to resolve, then the African will turn to the spiritual specialists. These specialists in turn utilize their expertise to resolve the crisis. Spiritism is a fact in African history, and the present situation attests to its ongoing reality.

Africans are not only dependent on good spirits, but also they fear the evil ones. The supernatural powers of the spirits contribute to this fear.

Fortes has put it well:

Men try to coerce and placate their ancestors by means of sacrifices. But the ancestors are unpredictable. It is their power to injure and their sudden attacks on the routine well-being that make men aware of them rather than their beneficial guardianship. (1945:145)

Spirits engage in mysterious operations that defy human understanding.

Such a state of affairs casts a spell of fear upon the entire community, and consequently, whatever action the specialists recommend after discerning what the ancestral spirits require is immediately carried out without question; after all, it is a matter of life and death (Idowu 1973:199). It is not only difficult to predict what spirits will do, but one can never know exactly how much one must do to be at peace with them. A high level of uncertainty and anxiety thus develops among the living. Fear characterizes the entire relationship.

Besides fearing the evil spirits themselves, Africans fear the one who can harm his or her victim through magical manipulation of the *gamani*. Witchcraft is practiced secretly, and thus every neighbor can be suspected of bringing calamity; hence an atmosphere of suspicion pervades the African community. It is necessary for each to protect both person and possessions; as a result, diviners, mediums and medicine men and women are greatly honored for their services to the community. For security purposes, Africans

consult diviners who will identify their enemy and then provide the relevant charm to ward off any possible evil; if the client wishes, diviners can provide a charm to bring harm to the client's enemies as well (Gehman 1989:75-78).

A Biblical Understanding of Spirits

The subject of the spirit world inevitably leads to consideration of the doctrine of angels, Satan, and demons. Because of the nature of our study, the focus will be on the relationship of demons and spirits in the context of mission. The approach of this study supposes that an understanding of human cultures is critical to the understanding of ourselves and others and necessary for meaningful interaction. All cultures have in them both good and evil elements. Virtuous components, found in every culture, speak of the fact that humans are created in the image of God. Cross-cultural witnesses do well to build upon these positive elements as they provide a "bridge" over which the gospel can be communicated effectively.

However, in every culture, there are evil components as well which speak of the Fall and of the activity of Satan and demons. Cross-cultural witnesses do well to recognize the work of Satan in the world and address it. This does not mean that culture is entirely evil; the good and neutral must be upheld. The Word of God must stand in judgment over all the particulars of

any given culture so that the entire culture can be transformed by the living God, revealed in Christ. Beliefs and practices that are consistent with the teaching of the Word of God must be upheld; those which run counter to the Bible must be rejected.

Although the Bible does not explain clearly the origin of Satan and demons, it gives very clear acknowledgment that Satan is a personal, evil being who is assisted in his purposes by demonic personal agents. One of the clearest references to Satan in the Old Testament is Job 1:6, “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.” This reference underlines the fact that Satan is personal and active in the world.

Moreover, the New Testament abounds with evidence that Satan and demons are personal, evil beings. Apart from the constant references in the Gospels, Paul states clearly that Satan is a real, personal force who can blind the mind of a human being (II Corinthians 4:4), who can change himself into an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:14), who hindered Paul (I Thessalonians 2:18) and who in his resistance against Paul’s ministry showed himself to be a systematic deceiver (II Corinthians 10-11). Such a one sets snares for the congregations of the saints (I Timothy 3:7; II Timothy 2:26) (Bromily

1979:922). The Bible further describes demons as beings capable of fear (Luke 8:31), decision making (Matthew 12:44), aggression (Matthew 8:28), get strength (Mark 5:4) and need a dwelling place (Matthew 12:43), (Strong 1907:455). The evidence of Scripture leaves no doubt that Satan and his demons are indeed personal beings who interact with humans and are active in the world.

Satan is the head of the kingdom of darkness, and demons are the agents of his evil designs. Paul's presentation of Satan as the head of the demonic forces is strongly supported by the Gospels, especially the synoptics.

Demons are seen as agents of a kingdom of which Satan is the head. The Lord Jesus Christ goes triumphantly into a decisive conflict with this evil empire (Mark 3:22-27). The demons are depicted as acknowledging Jesus as their most dangerous opponent and the one who will ultimately destroy them (Mark 1:24; 4:5:7). Mounting a challenge against Jesus, the demons influenced Jewish and Roman authorities as well as the masses to resist Christ. The Lord even saw the "forces of evil" at work influencing his disciples (Matthew 16:23), eventually taking possession of Judas (Luke 22:23) (Strong 1907:456).

The Apostle John calls Satan the "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31;

14:30; 16:11). He also speaks of the Devil in personal terms, calling him a “murderer from the beginning” and the “father of his children . . . a liar” (John 8:44). Moreover, as a result of demonic influence, the children of the Devil (I John 3:10) stand over against the children of God (Strong 1907:454; cf. Gehman 1989:108).

In summary, first, the Bible identifies but does not dwell on the origin of Satan and demons; rather, their nature and activities seem to be most important for the writers of Scripture. It is clear that they are sinful angels, as mentioned in II Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 (see also Revelation 12:3-9). Second, it is clear that when the Bible speaks of Satan and demons, Scripture intends us to understand that while these beings operate in the spiritual realm, they possess real power to influence reality in the natural realm. Third, the reason Scripture introduces the demonic realm to us at all is because of its significance to human history, i.e., the Bible takes no interest in these entities for their own sake. With Christ’s appearance in history, in the “light of his coming,” these hosts of darkness, aligned against the purposes of God, are suddenly exposed to our view. When the light of Christ shines forth on earth we become aware of the darkness which opposes it. This fact is evidenced in many parts of the world where the name of Christ has not been proclaimed

(Gehman 1989:109). On this point, Karl Barth noted that the most important thing we should know about demons is the fact that Christ conquered them. Satan is indeed a defeated foe, and the struggle against him should be viewed as a “mopping up operation” after the decisive victory wrought on the cross and at the resurrection (Cullman 1949:186-7).

However, the fact that the Bible teaches Christ has conquered the evil powers is not to deny the equally important fact that we still must struggle against these same evil powers (Ephesians 6:10 f.). No wonder we are still to pray, “deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:13). When we understand the nature of this spiritual conflict we should not be surprised that there is a considerable amount of demonic activity among and against Christians.

Satan and his demons are actively working against God’s redemptive program. Satan was the agent involved in the fall of humans (Genesis 3:1-8). Demons are portrayed in the Gospels as inflicting humanity with all manner of diseases (Matthew 9:32-33; Luke 8:26-36; 13:11-12; Mark 9:18, 22). Also magic, sorcery and fortune-telling, all central to the traditional culture of Africans, are identified as works of Satan in the account of Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6-11) and in the incident of the possessed girl of Philippi (Acts 16:16).

A Biblical Understanding of the Departed

While death has always existed as the final mystery of life, among God's people it has always been understood that the human personality is eternal.

As early as the time of Abraham, God had expressly revealed, "I will establish my testament between me and thee and thy seed throughout their generations for an everlasting testament" (Genesis 17:7). This feature, moreover, involves eternity for the individual as well as eternal preservation for the family group. Indeed, the truth of a personal eternity follows directly from the facts of the testamentary situation: God is everlasting, the promised inheritance under the testament consists of reconciliation to this eternal God, and it is therefore only to be expected that God's elect should continue to exist in fellowship with him. (Payne 1962:443)

The Hebrews believed that death marked the end of life, but not the end of existence. Thus even as early as the time of Jacob, the children of Abraham not only believed that they could have a continued existence in Sheol but also that they would be there with the other departed (Genesis 37:35, see also II Samuel 12:23). In most of the Old Testament period, the Hebrew understanding of this existence after death is difficult to call "eternal life."

The Hereafter in the Old Testament

Sheol, the Hebrew's place of the dead, was located below the earth (Genesis 37:35; 42:38; 44:29; Numbers 16:28-33) or sometimes below the

sea (Job 26:5). It was a land of darkness and disorder (Job 10:21-22), a place of silence (Psalms 94:17; 115:17), and a setting characterized by physical decay and hopelessness (Job 17:13-16). While nationality and rank might be recognized in Sheol (Isaiah 14:9-11; Ezekiel 32:17-32), it counted for nothing.

This picture of the place of the dead is not unique to Israel, as T. H.

Gaster observes:

Almost every detail of the . . . picture can be paralleled from Mesopotamian and Canaanite literature, showing that the Biblical writers were simply drawing on traditional Semitic folklore and not inventing any new original conceptions. (1962:787-788 cf. Eichrodt 1967:210)

Yet in one key area, the Hebrew understanding of the place of the dead is radically different than the beliefs of her Middle Eastern neighbors. Like Africa, all of Israel's neighbors understood that the dead were important to the living, could be utilized for help, and needed to be appeased with rituals and offerings. In contrast, for Israel the dead were completely and permanently shut off from the land of the living. They could not and did not play any part in Jewish life.

The inhabitants of Sheol, the “shades,” are called the *rephaim*, i.e., the “weak” or “powerless ones.” They are characterized by never ending

weariness and sleep (Job 3:17-19; 14:12). The dead know nothing about what is happening on earth (Job 14:21-22), and neither are they concerned about the living (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6; Job 21:21). Every person is appointed to Sheol (Job 30:23), and once a man has passed through the gates of death into the prison of Sheol he can never return to the land of the living (Job 7:9-10; 16:22; 38:17; Isaiah 38:10). Eichrodt notes:

The unimportance of the dead for the normal life of the Israelite is an incontrovertible fact, paralleled in only one other instance in the history of ancient religion, that of Homer's Greece. . . . In Israel . . . it was the shattering experience of God's will to rule which shut the gates of the kingdom of the dead, and proscribed any dealing with the departed. Yahweh's claim to exclusive Lordship covered not only alien gods but also those subterranean powers which might offer their help to men. (1967:221)

Since the dead were powerless and without knowledge, the Israelites considered it useless to seek their help (Isaiah 8:18-20). Neither was it necessary to fear them or appease their anger, but this was not all. The Israelites were specifically warned against the detestable practices of the Canaanites, which included spiritism (Leviticus 19:26). "Because of these detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 18:9-13; see also Leviticus 19:31; 20:6). Any person who sought to contact the dead for information was to be put to death (Leviticus 20:27).

Payne (1962:446) comments, “Utterly apart from the impossibility of human communion with the dead, the very attempt on the part of men to seek out spirits tends to impair their single-hearted devotion to God.” Therefore in the Old Testament God’s people consider the dead to be useless as a source of help and also powerless to harm the living. More importantly, any attempt to make contact with the dead placed a person under the wrath of the Holy God.

The Development of the Resurrection Hope

For many in Israel, Sheol was all there was to life after death. However, for others, an understanding grew of an ultimate state of the dead that was different from Sheol. These Jews looked forward in hope to the final day of the Lord when the dead would be resurrected, judged according to their observance of God’s laws, and either blessed with everlasting life or punished with eternal shame (Daniel 12:1-3; see also Job 14:12-15; 19:25-27; Psalms 73:23-26; Proverbs 12:28; 14:32; Isaiah 25:6-8; 26:19).

During that period between the close of the Old Testament period and the birth of Christ, both of these points of view were actively entertained. Thus for Jesus Ben Sirach, the author of Ecclesiasticus, Sheol is the final abode of the dead. He held no concept of a happy after-life or a resurrection.

Yet during this same period in the book of II Maccabees in chapter seven alone there are five references to a future resurrection (vv. 7, 11, 14, 23, 29). At the time of Christ both views of the future state of the resurrection of the dead were still current among the Jews.

. . . the Pharisees are those who . . . say that all souls are incorruptible; but that the souls of good men are only removed into other bodies, . . . but the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment. But the Sadducees are those that compose the second order, and take away the belief of the immortal duration of the souls and the punishments and rewards in Hades. (Wars of the Jews II, VIII:14)

This on-going debate is well illustrated in Paul's defense before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:6-10). Let it be sufficient at this point to say that the resurrection of Christ transforms this issue from a point of theological argument to a matter of historic fact and future certainty.

The Hereafter in the New Testament

Generally, the New Testament upholds the Old Testament concept of a radical separation between the world of the living and the world of the dead. On the one hand, the New Testament seems to present the idea of the dead sleeping until resurrection (Mark 5:38-42; John 11:11-14; Acts 7:59-60; I Thessalonians 4:13). This view was held by such eminent men as Luther, Wycliffe, and Tyndale (Martin 1977:386).

The New Testament seems to present on the other hand the idea that at death the believer goes straight into the presence of the Lord (Luke 16:22-24; 23:42-43; Philippians 1:21-24; I Thessalonians 4:14). Perhaps the best solution to this paradox is to say that at death the body sleeps in the grave, while the spirit goes into a spiritual realm (Ecclesiastes 12:6-7; Revelation 6:9-11) awaiting the resurrection when the spirits of the righteous are united with their immortalized resurrection bodies (Martin 1977:390).

In either case, the separation of the living and the dead is maintained. If the dead are asleep, then they are unavailable to affect the living; if the dead are in Paradise as indicated in the account of the rich man and Lazarus, they remain unable to cross into hell or to return to the land of the living (Luke 16:25-31). Some people object to this view, seeing Luke 16 as only a parable and as such not to be taken as a true picture of the state of the dead. However, in every case where the authenticity of Christ's parables may be checked against life's reality, he presents a true picture of his world. Why should the accuracy of this picture of the state of the dead be doubted?

Whether this is a parable or not is irrelevant to Luke. The narrative deals with the issue of stewardship. The rich ought to assist the poor with their resources rather than closing their hearts in cold selfishness. Such

arrogance that often accompanies the acquisition of wealth will be judged by the Lord. Besides this point, however, the passage raises the question of whether the dead are in contact with the living. In this text, the dead man had good intentions, desiring Lazarus to return to his relatives “to testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment” (Luke 16:27-28).

The answer was no. The law and the prophets are the Lord’s means to instruct the living in the ways of the Lord (Luke 16:29-31). There is no suggestion from the passage that the dead, even those with the best intentions, are in contact with the living. This same idea is seen in Isaiah 8:18-20 where the prophet condemns the consultation of the dead rather than the Word of God.

It is interesting to note that in all the passages that prohibit contact with the dead, mediums and spiritists are always mentioned. It is possible that the living do not actually get in touch with their dead relatives. It could be that spirits are the ones who are contacted and not necessarily the actual dead. Why would it take a specialist to talk to one’s dead father? On the other hand, my informants said that dead relatives actually spoke to the Bagisu without the involvement of intermediaries. I have had no firsthand experience of what my informants reported but it is difficult to refute the Bagisu

experiences.

Whatever the case, all forms of contact with the dead are prohibited by God as the figure below illustrates:

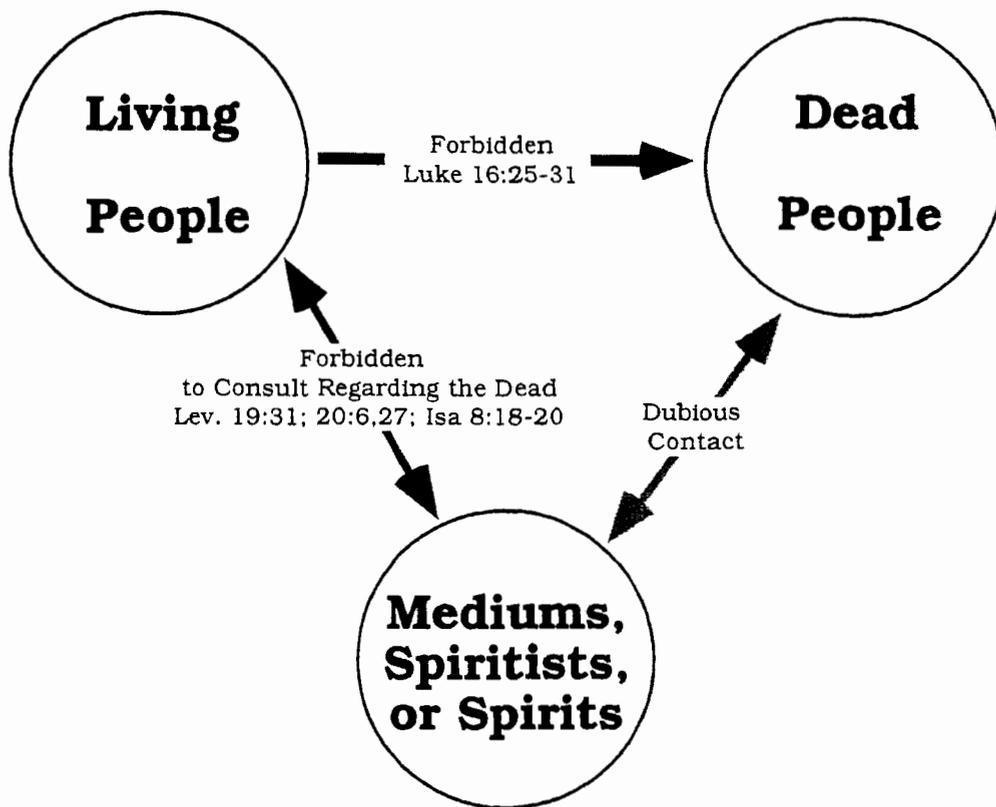


Figure 7: The Forbidden Triangle

Spiritism and the consulting of mediums is not mentioned in the New Testament, but sorcery is condemned as a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:20) which will ultimately bring a man's eternal separation from God (Revelation 21:8; 22:15). While the New Testament has little to say about the living

contacting the dead, it is quite explicit that in the future all people who have been declared righteous through faith in Christ shall be together with the Lord forever (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). While the exact order of these events is not clear and is subject to debate, the Day of the Lord will commence with the return of the Lord Jesus on the clouds accompanied by the army of heaven (Matthew 24:30-31; Acts 1:11; I Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 19:11-16). At that time all persons who have ever lived will be resurrected, and their spirits will be incorporated into a new and indestructible body (I Thessalonians 4:16-17; I Corinthians 15:50-57; Revelation 1:7). This also is the time of judgment when all persons will give an account of what they have done; they are then granted eternal life according to whether or not they belong to Christ (Matthew 15:31-46; Revelation 20:11-15). Those who do not belong to Christ pass into an eternity of torment (Matthew 13:42; Mark 9:47-48; Luke 16:23-24; Revelation 14:9-11; 20:10-15). During this period the present cosmos will be destroyed by fire to be replaced by a new heaven and earth (Matthew 24:29; II Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1) which will be the eternal home of the righteous. It is alternately described as a marvelously rich city (Revelation 21:2-22:5) or a totally peaceful garden, Eden revisited (Isaiah 11:6-9; Revelation 22:2). Central to the imagery is our renewed and

perfect relationship with the Lord (John 14:1-3; I Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 21:3-4).

Specific Biblical Passages on the Separation of the Living
and the Dead

We can conclude that unlike their neighbors, the people of God, both under the Old and the New Covenants, understood the dead to be completely cut off from contact with the living. However, two Bible passages seem to stand as exceptions to the rule: Saul and the medium at Endor (I Samuel 28:1-25) and the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36). To these we turn.

First, the secret things of creation belong to God (Deuteronomy 29:29). Death and Sheol are under his control (Job 26:6; Psalms 139:8; Amos 9:2; Proverbs 15:1). It is possible therefore for God to bring a spirit out of the dead and allow the spirit to speak to the living. What must be determined is whether either of these events is normative, i.e., events which we as God's people should expect to duplicate. The answer is a clear and decisive no. Both of the above cases are in fact exceptions to God's overall separation of the living and the dead.

The visit of Saul to the medium at Endor (I Samuel 28) can certainly

not be pointed to as a biblical endorsement of spiritism. The Law of Moses was clear: God's people were not to permit a medium in their midst. Indeed, in his better days, Saul had expelled the mediums and spiritists from Israel (I Samuel 28:3). Further, when Samuel does speak to Saul it is only to confirm God's rapidly approaching judgment on his rebelliousness (I Samuel 28:16-19). Clearly, consulting the medium is portrayed by Scripture as a final act of moral failure on Saul's part.

Not only is this incident not an endorsement of spiritism, but it also calls into serious question the ability and effectiveness of spiritistic activity in actually contacting the dead. The medium (*ob* in Hebrew) calls upon her familiar spirit (*obot* in Hebrew), i.e., her "pet ghost." Instead, to her terror a god-like being (Elohim) appears. Clearly this was not what she expected.

Joyce Baldwin comments:

The incident does not tell us anything about the veracity of claims to consult the dead on the part of mediums, because the indications are that this was an extraordinary event for her, and a frightening one because she was not in control. (1988:159)

M. F. Unger goes even further in his judgment of this passage:

Saul's visit to the spiritistic medium at Endor (I Samuel 28:3-25) is Scripture's expose of the fraudulence of spiritism and its unequivocal condemnation of all complicity with occultism. Samuel's spirit was actually brought back from the spirit world, not by the medium of Endor, but by God himself. The Lord stepped in to show the duplicity of the spiritistic claim of

communication with the dead. The real appearance of Samuel so frightened the medium that she screamed out in fright, a sign that God had stepped in to expose the fraud. (1971:51)

It should be added here that while evangelical scholars deny the ability of mediums to contact the dead they do not doubt that spiritists actually contact supernatural powers. Spiritists contact familiar spirits who do in fact possess specific knowledge and can answer questions. However, it is difficult to determine whether these familiar spirits are of dead persons or demons who pass themselves off as the dead. Walter Martin notes:

it is the direct testimony of Holy Scriptures that spiritism is the masquerade of demonic forces, who pretend to be departed spirits with the intent of deceiving through the power of Satan those foolish enough to believe the testimony of demons in preference to the authority of the Word of God Himself. (1977:199-200)

The second biblical incident where the living talked with the dead, the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13), in no way suggests that Christians should expect this event to be repeated until the final Day of the Lord. The transfiguration was a special revelation of the glory of the Son which pointed to him as the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets and foreshadowed his eventual return as Lord and Judge. Peter suggested that booths be constructed for Moses, Elijah, and Christ so that the disciples could serve these three glorious beings. God himself rebukes this idea by recalling Moses

and Elijah to their place and commanding the disciples to listen to the Son. We are not to seek fellowship with the dead, even dead saints. Rather, we are to look at and to obey the Son.

There is a third passage, Hebrews 12:1, which is sometimes used as a proof-text to show that the dead do in fact watch over the living. To interpret this passage correctly, one must ask what is meant by the author's use of "witnesses." Some commentators in the past have suggested that these were the dead saints now seated as spectators and watching as we run "the race set before us." Modern commentators consider such an interpretation improbable. Thomas Hewitt comments:

The word "witness" can mean spectator, but the context suggests that the runners are to look at them rather than they at the runners. Moreover, throughout the Epistle, and especially in Chapter 11, "witness" invariably means "one who bears witness" i.e. one who testifies to a certain fact and this is the more natural meaning here. (1960:189)

F. F. Bruce concurs:

But in what sense are they "witness"? Not probably in the sense of spectators, watching their successors as they in their turn run the race for which they have entered; but rather in the sense that by their loyalty and endurance they have borne witness to the possibilities of the life of faith. It is not so much they who look at us as we who look to them for encouragement. (1964:346)

So while it is not impossible to see in this passage support for the assertion

that the dead watch over the living, it is wiser to accept the more probable interpretation; such an interpretation is in closer agreement with the general biblical view that the dead are completely cut off from the land of the living.

Summary

Africans have their own worldview of which the spirit world is part. This is true of the Bagisu. The African perceives that he or she is surrounded by spirits and forces, among them good spirits, ancestors, evil spirits, and principalities, manifesting themselves through human lives, activities, and the environment. Along with the perception of the presence of these spiritual forces is an extensive and complex understanding that influences the African's philosophy of life.

The Bible, on the other hand, assumes the existence of spirits and forces without particular interest in their origin; the Bible pays attention only to their nature and activities. According to the Bible, Satan and demons operate in the spiritual realm and can influence reality in the natural realm. However, the Bible teaches that Christ has conquered the evil powers.

While both the traditional African viewpoint and Scripture understand the human personality to be immortal, there are two important points of contrast between the biblical view of life after death and the view of the

traditional African.

First, the view of African tradition is that the dead are in an on-going relationship with the living. The living receive blessings through the power of the ancestors as long as they are careful in their observance of rituals, rites, and traditions. At the same time the dead enjoy a more blessed hereafter because of the offerings and sacrifices of the living. When the living fail in their responsibilities to the departed, punishment can be expected.

The biblical view, on the other hand, points out a radical discontinuity between this life and the hereafter. The dead are portrayed in Scripture as being cut off from current knowledge of their descendants and powerless either to help or to hurt the living. In addition, God's Word is plain in its constant condemnation of attempts to contact or make use of the dead. The result is that Christians are freed from any fear of the dead and are not bound to either ritual or the claims of the diviner. This does not mean that African Christians should not respect their dead relatives who qualify to be ancestors. On the contrary, they ought to do so, though not out of fear that their dead will harm them if they fail to do so.

A second important point of contrast between African tradition and the biblical teaching on death has to do with the ultimate state of the dead. In

African thought the cosmos is eternal, and history as such is an endless repetition of the status quo. At death, every person, with little regard as to how he or she has lived, can expect to enter a spirit world parallel to the world of the living. However, in the spirit realm the dead gain power. The Bagisu refer to their ancestors as *bakhulu* (the powerful, the important ones).

In the biblical view, the present state of the dead is only temporary. Whether we see the dead as sleeping in the grave or as enjoying paradise (or suffering in torment), the time will come when history will end, and the dead will be raised to pass through the final judgment and into either heaven or hell. The final state of the wicked dead is everlasting torment, called the second death. The ultimate state of the righteous dead is an everlasting fellowship with both God and all other individuals declared righteous.

In light of these basic differences between the traditional African view of life after death and the biblical standard, how should the African Christian live within his traditional community? Every Christian must critically examine his/her participation in traditional practices to make certain he/she is not violating the divine condemnation against spiritistic activity.

Because of the hope which Christians enjoy in Christ, Christians must encourage one another that they need not fear death, the dead, or the

pronouncements of the diviner. Neither should we fear for the future of our loved ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

On the other hand, Christians need to be greatly concerned for those around them who have not put their trust in Christ since Scripture gives no grounds for hope concerning their eternal future.

CHAPTER 4

The Coming of Christianity and the Reality of the Spirit World

The coming of CMS missionaries to Uganda can be best understood against the background of European exploration and colonialism in Africa. However, Uganda was not a British colony but a British Protectorate. In contrast with their minimal contributions in some other African countries, missionaries played a key and positive role in the social, economic, and political life of Uganda. They focused on educating and developing church and political leaders from the outset. Though their main task was to spread the gospel, they recognized the value of a peaceful and prosperous Uganda. CMS missionaries Bishop Tucker and Archdeacon Walker were deeply involved on behalf of the Baganda chiefs in drafting the “Uganda Agreement of 1900,” which was for the good of the country. This agreement protected the country against colonialism and empowered the king of the land (Tuma 1978:1-2).

The CMS had its beginnings in the Wesleyan revival in England. “Their particular emphasis was on the Bible, as the primary source of authority for Christians, and on the need for individual conversion”

(Welbourn 1965:23). A summary of the religious background of the CMS is helpful:

Most of the Christians in England were what would be called conservative. However, the Modernists were tremendously impressed by the conclusions of the scientific study of the Bible. They felt the need to present Christianity in a form which would appeal to men who were beginning to think in scientific terms. In their early days, they were inclined to apply to theology criteria which they derived from physics. But they inspired a radical re-thinking of theological expression and of the basis of the Christian faith. Their influence continues not so much in an organized movement. (Welbourn 1965:23)

The Evangelical Awakening in Britain brought forth a conservatism which sought experience with God. Out of this experience issued a passion for the evangelization of other peoples. One group of missionaries who came to Uganda shared this experiential background. With the advent of a scientific mentality in Europe, theologians employed scientific reasoning to the faith in an attempt to make it relevant to the times. Another group which arose from the resulting Modernist movement relegated the supernatural aspects of Scripture to myth. The foundations of the Christian faith were under scrutiny; they required validation by the tests of science. Awareness of the differing theological foundations of these two groups is important for an interpretive understanding of the religious events in Uganda.

At the invitation of the king of Buganda, Mutesa I, Henry Stanley sent

a telegraph to the CMS headquarters in London. The CMS published the information, and within a few days there were sufficient funds for missionary work, and by the end of 1875 the "Uganda Mission" was born. The first missionaries to be sent to Uganda were Mr. Thomas O'Neill and Reverend C. T. Wilson under the leadership of Lt. Shergold Smith. On June 30, 1877, Rev. Wilson and Lt. Shergold became the first Christian missionaries to arrive in Buganda. O'Neill stayed at Kagei with mission goods. Unfortunately, when Lt. Shergold Smith returned to pick up O'Neill and the goods in December 1877, both were killed on Ukerewe Island by the chief and his subjects. In the middle of 1878, Rev. Wilson returned to an extremely difficult situation in the South of Buganda. There was no missionary in Uganda until Wilson's return with a new leader, Alexander Mackay, in November 1878. In February 1879, three more missionaries joined them, Dr. R. W. Felkim, Rev. G. Litchfield and Rev. Charles William Pearson (Tuma 1978:17-18). Two weeks later, Father Lourdel and Brother Amans of the Roman Catholic White Father's Society arrived. Mackay was hostile to the White Fathers, and although the king was perplexed at this attitude, he nevertheless gave the White Fathers a reception just as he had done for the CMS missionaries. Mackay wrote in his diary on Saturday, 24

February 1879, following the reception:

It seems to me that God has allowed false teachers to come that we may be more earnest in teaching the truth. On that, we could and would use the short time we have more to God's glory! We did what we could to keep the tares from being sown when the first Papists turned up; but we failed, and now they will settle in the country beside us. Well, as Christ Himself taught, let the tares grow up along with the wheat, and on the harvest day God will gather them separately. (Mackay 1890:118)

This attitude led to misunderstandings between the two sets of missionaries.

This conflict had its roots in Europe where the old colonial and religious rivalries were common.

In the meantime, Mutesa I had established his kingdom through his political astuteness. Arabs, Swahili traders, and Europeans who had arrived prior to the advent of Christianity had established a relationship with the king. His policy was to not allow foreigners to move freely around the country, forcing both the CMS missionaries and White Fathers to stay within the vicinity of the king's court. Mackay established a working relationship with the king by teaching him and other court attendants and chiefs how to read and write (Tuma 1978:19).

It appears that the king had expected more from the CMS missionaries than just religion. Since he wanted to expand his kingdom, he asked CMS missionaries to manufacture guns and powder. Mutesa I, having rejected

Islam, now asked the CMS missionaries to baptize him. However, since he was polygamous, he was turned down. Similarly, the White Fathers turned down the king's request for baptism. This act marked the beginning of trouble for the missionaries. But as it has been noted, besides this trouble from the king, "Lourdel and Mackay, the respective leaders of the Catholic and Protestant Missions, were intolerant men, not easily given to compromise so that their doctrinal arguments before Mutesa could not have impressed the latter as anything but pointless quibbling" (Tuma 1978:6).

As a result of these goings-on, Mutesa's attitude towards the Christian missions cooled off visibly and, proportionately, Baganda's traditional religions looked like they were gaining the influence they had temporarily lost at court with the coming of the European missionaries. (Tuma 1978:6-7)

The conflict was compounded by the traditional, the Muslim, the Protestant, and the Roman Catholic faiths. "This meant that the more converts the missionaries baptized, the more the Baganda were divided" (Tuma 1978:7). This conflict culminated in civil war between Protestants and Catholics and between Christians and Muslims. When Mutesa died in 1884, his son Mwanga replaced him. Mwanga had embraced Islam. Persecution of missionaries and local believers culminated in the death of Bishop Hannington, the exile of the missionaries, and the massive killings of those

who later became the Uganda martyrs (Mackay 1890:255-8).

Despite these trials the church in Uganda had been established on the foundation of the Word of God and to a great extent these trials only strengthened it. Fortunately, the CMS missionaries had trained local catechists and formed a national church council which took responsibility for the work while missionaries were exiled. Tuma's observations sum up this period:

In Buganda's case, the clash between the "new" and the "old" was overshadowed by the political strife between the CMS and the Roman Catholics which characterized the initial period of the history of the Christian Church in Buganda. The fighting rather than anything else helped to advertise Christianity in Uganda [by the providence of God]. When the warring factions had settled their differences and peace had been restored, religious conversion and missionary station buildings began to progress steadily. By 1906, the end date of this discussion, the Church still had a few internal difficulties, particularly relating to the spiritual life of Christians. However, Church membership was growing and the Buganda Church's improving position was increasingly exploited by encouraging some of the Baganda Christians and Church leaders to go as missionaries to the neighboring counties, thus indicating both the internal and external expansion of the Buganda Church. (1978:28)

Under these circumstances of Christian expansion, the gospel was introduced to the Bagisu by the Baganda and the CMS missionaries in 1901. In 1900 Baganda administrators had conquered Bugisu, but these administrators were the very ones who first shared the gospel with them. Tuma records these

initial encounters between the chief Muganda administrator, Kakungulu, the Baganda administrators, and the people:

It was Kakungulu's policy to leave a Muganda administrator in every county he conquered. This policy led to the growth of several but strong enclosed villages in which the new Baganda chiefs and their followers resided. As many of these chiefs were Christians, they encouraged Christian life to prevail in these enclosed villages with the result that by 1900 a chain of villages with some Christian presence had been established in Teso, Bugisu and Bukedi. Admittedly, there was not much contact initially between the inmates of the enclosed villages and the local people. (1978:48)

It was in this setting that Rev. William A. Crabtree, the first CMS missionary in Bugisu, started a mission station at Nabumali which was then Kakungulu's headquarters. However, due to his ill-health, Crabtree was later joined and then replaced by Rev. John Bremner Purvis. Miss Elisa L. Pilgrim and Miss Agnes Margaret Morris joined Rev. Purvis in 1905. The two lady missionaries started a girls' school and a dispensary at the Nabumali mission station between 1905 and 1906, marking a significant growth of the work of God among the Bagisu. Subsequently more missionaries arrived in Bugisu to consolidate the work (Tuma 1978:50-51).

Some Early Missionaries' Attitudes Toward the Bagisu

It is not our intention to dwell on the negative elements of missionary activity. However, in order to have some understanding of how we can deal

with the problem of reversions, the general attitudes of the early missionaries should be understood. A major source of information here is the missionary documents. The most detailed account of the missionary attitude toward the native culture is documented by Rev. Mackay, the leader of the CMS in Uganda (1878-1890). From memoirs collected from his letters, diaries and publications, his sister documented in several pages his understanding of the Baganda culture, in a section entitled "Heathen Superstitions" (Mackay 1890:143-178). Basically, for Mackay the spirit world did not exist, and although he acknowledged the work of Satan in Scripture, the Baganda were only superstitious.

Miss Pilgrim, who labored among the Bagisu for most of her life, observed that "the people were full of superstitions, believing that they were bewitched when this only existed in their minds" (CMS Report 1908-1909:161). (See Appendix 3 for CMS Codes). She reported that many Bagisu families, after suffering illness, had moved out of Nabumali, the CMS station. "They say the place is bewitched and our glass windows are supposed to have been the causes of drought" (CMS Report 1908-1909:161).

Miss A. M. Morris, who came to join Miss Pilgrim, also wrote on December 7, 1908, at Nabumali: "The Bagisu are quite unlike the Baganda,

very wild and disinclined to learn and just full of superstition.” She cites an example of a time when there was a severe drought in Bugisu, and a man who had been given a mirror claimed to have used it magically to bring rain. She could not imagine that people could use supernatural powers to affect the course of events, especially those pertaining to nature. She also concluded that the girls were slow to learn due to these superstitions, “for their minds are far from receptive.” She continued, “One’s faith is often tried as one sees those whom one thinks most hopeful, falling back into heathen customs” (CMS Report 1908-1909:162). It is difficult to establish where the problem lies at this stage. Miss. A. M. Morris wrote on November 29, 1909, from Nabumali that

Everywhere it is obvious that they live in fear of evil spirits. If any one is ill it is customary to sacrifice goats, fowls, or even cattle, to please the spirits, and to keep them out of their houses; places are built for them outside most houses, in which it is hoped they will stay, and thus folks think sickness is kept from those in the house. (CMS Report 1908-1909:269)

The following year on November 26, 1910, Miss Morris further reported that

In some places, many of the people are afraid, (nearly 400 people attended outdoor services) as they say that we bring sickness and death amongst them; but those who do come seem to listen with interest as we try to make them realize that it is life not death that we bring to them. (CMS Report 1910-1911:236)

In the CMS Proceedings 1912-1913, a missionary described Bagisu

beliefs, reflecting the prevalent attitude of European missionaries at that time that peoples of other cultures did not have the knowledge of God. He said:

The people who are called Bagisu, have some knowledge of a Creator, whom they name *Were* but he is regarded as One who brings death, sickness and suffering, and is invariably called “*Were* the bad.” There are all sorts of other gods: white, red, and black *Were* and *Were* of the person, i.e., the evil spirits with which one man possesses another. Of the latter, there are evidently millions for the people are never free from the fear of being bewitched. There is no such thing as a good god in their religion. (CMS Proceedings 1912-1913:69)

This description of Bagisu belief was flawed since the Bagisu believe in a God from whom all goodness emanates, only that he is unapproachable.

This is not the same as the claim that they do not believe in a good God.

Rev. W. Holden reported from Bugisu on November 23, 1906, that people come to the service willingly, but observed,

They believe in a great Creative Spirit, whom they call ‘*Were*’ but never worship or propitiate him. They say he ought never to be spoken about and some go as far as to say that our praying to him and speaking to him brings sickness. (CMS Proceedings 1906-1907:272)

Rev. Holden concluded that Bagisu had little desire to be taught. He requested prayers, “that the Bagisu may be given a desire for God and his Word: at present they have very little” (CMS Proceedings 1907:241).

In the following year Rev. Holden reported complete failure saying,

“One may see the causes of failure but be entirely powerless to remove them” (CMS Annual Report November 30 1908-1909:161). While he did not elaborate on the causes of failure, apathy toward the new religion was evident. In the same year Miss Pilgrim, who worked among the Bagisu for many years, expressed the same concern. Noting Bagisu indifference, she wrote; “We get them to come to church on Sunday, but to come and sit down and learn to read seems impossible” (CMS Annual Letters 1908:161). It appears that the Bagisu had a reason for this attitude, which the missionaries did not realize. A situation of this nature is always complex. Because missionaries did not know what the real problem was, they thought the best thing would be to send out more native teachers. But when there was talk of expanding the mission beyond Nabumali, Rev. Holden advised against the idea: “To send out a native teacher at present is useless, as they [Bagisu] pay not the least attention to his message” (CMS Annual Report 1908-1909:161).

Miss Pilgrim, a nurse at Nabumali wrote,

Amongst such people as the Bagisu, it is a little difficult to say how much progress has been made, for the work is uphill and difficult and the people are slow to learn and very loth to give up their old ideas and customs. . . . We find a great many of the people have great belief in their own native medicines and charms, and only come to us when these fail and the patients [are] at their last gasp; and if the patient dies after taking our medicine, we are held responsible. (CMS Proceedings 1909:266)

Apparently any death reinforced the idea of the Bagisu that they should not go to the hospital in the first place.

The following narrative illustrates a similar problem from a neighboring district. The Rev. A. L. Kitching reported on November 10, 1910, from his station, "Some trouble is sometimes caused by the anxiety of heathen relatives to carry off a patient just as he is beginning to improve, in order that he may have the advantages of treatment by the local witch-doctor" (CMS Annual Report 1910-1911:327). Rev. Holden reported, "Bagisu are being still averse to European treatment, or even if they do bring a patient, they do so generally when the patient is in a hopeless condition" (CMS Annual Letters 1908:161). One missionary attributed Bagisu disinterest in missionary treatment to shyness:

This has not been attended as one could wish. The people are so intensely shy about coming that I have even known a young lad with a bad itch run away rather than be given an ointment to apply to himself. (CMS Annual Letters 1903:190)

It was also reported to be difficult to induce the Bagisu to try European medicines owing to their fear of being bewitched. Miss Pilgrim observed that the "Bagisu were so afraid of being bewitched but within the last few months quite a number had been admitted, so this fear is dying a natural death" (CMS

Annual Report 1911-1912:233-234).

These accounts reveal some ignorance or perhaps disregard on behalf of the missionaries toward the spirit world among the Bagisu. The two Synods described below will illustrate the effects of this ignorance.

Spirit World Issues -- Synods (1913, 1919)

When it was discovered that several Christians were involved in witchcraft, an issue related to the spirit world, the church could offer no solution! At the Uganda Native Women's Central Conference held on April 2, 1919, chaired by Miss Furley, a missionary, and attended by 28 native women delegates and 14 English ladies, the issue of the spirit world was raised. First, in a section on witchcraft, "Mukono (Diocese) brought forward that this was still practiced by nominal Christians" (CMS Letter No. 140). After some discussion, the conference asked that the laws against witchcraft listed in the official Gazette be published in the native paper *Ebifa*.

Second, the Mukono Diocese called "the attention of the Synod to the fact that such things were greatly on the increase, and asked that it [witchcraft] may be prevented" (CMS Letter No. 140). In this case, there was no solution from the church regarding the issue of witchcraft except to appeal to the law of the land so that culprits would be prosecuted. Needless

to say, the Synod's disciplinary action provided no real lasting solution because it offered no spiritual remedy.

The following is a sample of the Resolutions passed by the Synod of the Church of Uganda, July 8-10, 1913, (CMS Letter No. 140) regarding native customs. It should be noted that for every issue, there was a resolution, and yet none of the resolutions provide any solution except to condemn the practices as evil.

Letter No. 140 -- Resolutions passed by the Synod of the Church of Uganda, July 8-10, 1913.

Native Customs

Minute 3

That teachers be enjoined to do all that they can to impress on their congregations the evil of resorting to Mohammedanism for superstitious help; and that a Tract be written dealing with the question and be read in church every year.

Minute 4

The Synod declares its conviction as to the harmlessness of eating the totem, but in as much as the totem preserves the integrity of the tribe, it should be preserved in such ways as using tribal names, note-paper headings, signet rings, an emblem on the wall of the house. Thus, eating or not eating will in time become unimportant.

Minute 5

That those who dance at the birth of twins, and perform other rites connected therewith, shall come under church discipline as evil doers.

Minute 6

That a tract be written dealing with “Daimonia” and witchcraft, and be read in church as a Homily.

Minute 7

That “Daimoni” be substituted for “Muzimu” in all translations.

Minute 8

That the ceremony of giving tribal names accompanied with heathen rites be forbidden, but that the tribal name be given in baptism as a second Christian name, and thus prevent the invocation of an ancestor to name the child in a heathen ceremony.

Minute 9

That it is evil to build dwelling houses on graves, but mausolea are harmless.

Minute 10

That the ceremony of cutting the *mulindi* [the ends of a bark cloth used in burial] is evil.

Minute 11

That the ceremony of “blood-brotherhood” is evil owing to the curses involved.

Minute 12

That there is no profit in a “Funeral Wake,” but because we have no power to order its universal cessation, we suggest that:-

- (a) The chief be in charge of the “Wake,” and that the Mengo Council be asked to make a Law to that effect.
- (b) The “Wake” be kept in daylight, and a teacher called in.
- (c) The head of the “Wake” and the chief of the village dismiss all visitors

immediately when the ceremony is over, and no woman be allowed to wait for her husband to bring the beer.

Church Discipline

A. Preventative Measures

Minute 13

That there be systematic visitation and registration of all Christians.

Minute 14

That the "Class" system be instituted in which 8 or 10 houses are in charge of chosen Christians, and men and women be gathered together for prayer and instruction.

Minute 15

That there be letters of commendation on leaving a district.

Minute 16

That there be a registration of all communions, and that Communicants' Unions for instruction, prayer and mutual help be instituted.

Minute 17

That there be Annual District Conferences of teachers at Central Stations.

Minute 18

That tracts on Topical topics be printed to help teachers in their preaching and teaching.

Minute 19

That the Temperance movement be pressed forward, and pledges taken and that people be encouraged to substitute coffee and tea for intoxicants, by

building “clubs” for their sale.

Minute 20

That not more than half of any Church Council be clergy or teachers.

B. Disciplinary Measures

Minute 21

That the procedure laid down in St. Matthew 18:15-17 be followed in outline, i.e.,

- (a) An individual interview
- (b) Attestation by witnesses
- (c) Accusation before Church Council, first the Parochial Council and then the District Council.
- (d) Condemnation by Communicants as a body.

Minute 22

That no accusation be brought before the Church Council before (a) and (b) have been exhausted.

Minute 23

That condemnation by the Church Council be followed by:-

- (a) Suspension from Holy Communion
- (b) Public notification of the fact in the church
- (c) Prosecution; its advisability to be considered by the District Church Council and if recommended, to communicate with the Diocesan Council.

Minute 24

That there be formal excommunication in extreme cases, to be decided by the Communicants of the District; voting by ballot.

Minute 25

That a Sub-Committee to form a Marriage Board be formed, consisting

of four members, with the Bishop.

Analysis of the Resolutions of the 1913 Synod

Minute 3 A Tract to Combat Islam. An analysis of the resolutions regarding native customs as passed by the Synod of the Church of Uganda reveals a failure to recognize the reality of the spirit world and the issues related to it. The resolutions evidence a lack of determination to tackle the spirit related issues at their roots. In the third minute, rather than engaging in discussion with the nationals and local Christians to determine why converts are “resorting to Mohammedanism for superstitious help,” the Synod stresses the need for “teachers be enjoined to do all that they can to impress on their congregations the evil of Islam and the solutions it provides.” The negative is condemned but no positive alternative is suggested to deal with the underlying reasons which cause a person to resort to Islamic practices. Root issues must be addressed, and they must be addressed with effective Christian solutions.

The second solution, to write a tract to be read every year, offered to the problem of Christians turning to Mohammedanism to solve problems related to the spirit world, was a weak one too. As much as liturgy is essential, matters of such a practical nature which so directly affect lives

cannot be relegated to a tract to “be read in church every year”

(See Letter No. 146 Minute 3). The homily would be read most likely in a foreign language with no active participation from the audience. Rather than holding discussion to find a real solution to the problem, the Synod resorted to what it knew; it insisted on a cognitive approach. In fact, the approach should have been practical and experiential.

Miss Pilgrim, writing from Mbale on January 27, 1919, to Mr. Manley indicated that her main concern was the growth of Islam. She wrote,

I am astonished at the growth of Mohammedanism during the time I have been on furlough. Only a few days ago, two government officials asked me if we could not make an effort to combat the spread of Islam among the people, especially amongst the Bagisu speaking people. They had both been touring through the country and found a great number of chiefs and people calling themselves Mohammedans. The sad thing is that though we have a great number of teachers at work in Bagisu, there is no European in touch with the people and I think we are losing ground. I cannot help thinking it was a great mistake closing down the work at Nabumali: if the place was not central, we ought to have started a station elsewhere. (CMS Uganda Notes Vol. vii No. 11, CMS Letter No. 244, Uganda 1906:168)

In his article, "Moral Darkness in the Dark Continent," A. T. Pierson wrote

Islam, though holding a smaller number in bonds, presents a graver problem than Paganism. It has more truth, and being monotheistic and non-idolatrous, its converts are more decent and intelligent, less barbarous and degraded. But it only refines

Uganda Notes Vol. vii No. 11, CMS Letter No. 244, Uganda 1906:168)

He cited an interesting illustration to show how Islam accommodated whatever the converts felt was necessary:

A Moslem [Muslim] said to a European: You must not wear our clothes. They are given us of God to set forth the character of our religion, as yours set forth the character of your own. Our clothes are wide, easy flowing; so is our religion. We can steal, lie, commit adultery, and do as we wish, and our prophet will make it all right for us at the last day. Your clothes are like your religion; tight-fitting, narrow and restraining. (CMS Uganda Notes Vol. vii No. 11, CMS Letter No. 244, Uganda 1906:168)

Pierson went on to say that “the pliant pagan readily becomes a fanatical Moslem [Muslim], more unreachable than ever with the Gospel” (CMS Uganda Notes Vol. vii No. 11, CMS Letter No. 244, Uganda 1906-1908). Muslims seemed to provide that which was close to the Bagisu worldview. This fact lends itself to Kirby’s (1985) analysis that any form of Christianity failing to address a people’s needs will not take root and is often rejected when a viable alternative is offered. In this case, given the opportunity, they would become Muslims, as Islam addressed needs which Christianity did not. Unfortunately, the work of Christian education was regarded by the Uganda Mission as “the best bulwark against the inroads of Islam” (CMS Proceedings 1919-1920:32). The report continued, “If however the Church

makes good use of the armory of education which is entrusted to her, side by side with a strong spiritual and moral life, there need be no great anxiety as to the advance of Islam” (CMS Proceedings 1919-1920:32).

The resolution is a further indication that the CMS failed to recognize or understand the spirit world and issues related to it. Islam, however, dealt with issues by providing means to cope with the uncertainties and crises of life. Thus they achieved considerable success in winning Christians to their faith.

Minute 4 and Minute 9 (Totems). Regarding totemism, the Synod understood “the harmlessness of eating the totem.” Paul’s teaching in Romans 14 and I Corinthians 11 seems to favor this judgment; however, as it was with the Corinthians, the issue is not simply eating or not eating. It is the meaning behind the eating which demanded attention. The totem gave each clan its identity and philosophy of life. Given the spiritual significance of the totem, a spiritual and practical approach was needed. A possible functional substitute could have been suggested if discussion had been permitted. A common totem among Christians would be anything that resembles the cross of Christ. This should have been the pattern to deal with issues of this nature.

Minutes 5, 8, 10, and 11 (Twins and Burial Ceremony). “That those

who dance at the birth of twins, and perform other rites connected therewith, shall come under church discipline as evil doers.” Again the question of “why the dance at the birth of twins” needed an explanation; why was this rite being performed? Bagisu believed that twins would die if the ritual dance was not performed. It was for the purpose of saving the life of their children that parents carried out the dance. To declare these Christians as “evil doers” and bring them under church discipline without providing an adequate functional substitute only encouraged the parents in question to perform the rituals in secret. These ceremonies involving the giving of tribal names need to be Christianized and given a place in the life of the church even today.

The burial ceremony that involves “Cutting the *Mulindi*” and “blood-brotherhood” was condemned as evil. The Bagisu believed that the heir to the deceased had to cut the back cloth (*mulindi*) in which the body was wrapped before burial. This ritual signified respect for the deceased.

“Blood-brotherhood” was a ceremony performed involving two friends who were not necessarily biologically related. Their friendship had so much significance that the entire clans of these friends became involved. To facilitate this involvement, each of the two friends cut the right thumb and availed their blood to the other for sucking. By this token, they became blood

brothers and vowed to honor that commitment, or else a curse would befall the defaulter. In cases like these, an open discussion to determine which elements are evil and which ones are good before an appropriate decision can be made cannot be overemphasized.

Reality of the Spirit World

Until recently, evangelical Christians had not openly discussed at any major consultation the reality of the spirit world. The Willowbank Report (1978) was historic in this regard. Leading Christian figures from Asia, Africa and Latin America, prefacing their “affirmation” of the reality of the spirit world, asserted, “Of course, some are questioning today whether a belief in spirits is compatible with our modern scientific understanding of the universe” (Stott and Coote 1979:449). These ministers had come to terms with the spirit world by experience and consequently had come to conclusions contrary to the conventional understanding which denied the reality of that realm. Earlier, an African theologian, Professor Mbiti (1969), in a classic book, *African Religions and Philosophies*, voiced his belief in the reality of the spirit world. He demonstrated that the African situation was one in which crises in any form were “Religious experiences and it required a religious approach to deal with them.” The solution for Africans lay in the spirit world

where supernatural powers were at work. Aware of the scientific understanding regarding the spirit world and such powers, Mbiti declared,

This mystical power is not a fiction: Whatever it is; it is a reality, and one with which African peoples have to reckon. Everyone is directly or indirectly affected, for better or for worse, by beliefs and activities connected with this power, particularly in its manifestation as magic, sorcery and witchcraft. (1969:169)

Without question, to deny or ignore the reality of the spirit world has serious consequences. Hiebert describes the reality of the spirit realm:

Above this level (this world where science and all the five senses are applied) are beings and forces that cannot be directly perceived but are thought to exist on this earth. These include spirits, ghosts, ancestors, demons, and earthly gods and goddesses who live in trees, rivers, hills and villages. These live not in some other world or time, but are inhabitants with humans and animals of this world and time. (1982:41)

If one does not perceive the reality of the spirit world, no attempt will be made to address the needs that are related to it. Yet for African believers, crises related to the spirit world are real, and it should not be surprising to see them turn to “specialists” within their traditional settings for solutions.

Arnold’s affirmation of the reality of the spirit world is worth noting:

Magic, witchcraft, and sorcery have played a part in every society in the history of religion. The main features are always the same. These practices were based on a firm belief in the realm of good and evil spirits [spirit world]. Those who practiced magic believed the supernatural beings could be manipulated to bring positive benefit or harm. For the covenant

people of God these practices were regarded as evil and detestable to the Lord. (Arnold 1992:59-60)

The spirit realm and related activities, e.g., witchcraft, sorcery, divination, magic, etc., are a reality not just for the Bagisu; the Scriptures are replete with similar examples of the spiritual world and its activities.

Activities like these are condemned by God as illegitimate and evil and are confronted by his power.

In Daniel 10:13-14, 20-21, there is clear reference to the spiritual realm and specific references to spiritual beings, beings which are seen as hindering God's purposes in the earth. The account in Exodus 4 shows human ability to manipulate spiritual powers and produce tangible effects by means of magical charms. Snakes were duplicated by the Egyptian magicians after Moses' rod had become a serpent. However, while the magicians had power to manipulate the spiritual realm, God's power was shown to be greater than theirs.

The involvement of God's people with idols, witchcraft, mediums, spirits and magical practices is forbidden in Scriptures. The fundamental issue is allegiance; God alone is to be worshipped. In Psalms 106:37-38, idols and false gods can be equated with demons of I Corinthians 10:14,20,21,22. Israel is admonished to keep away from all forms of magic

and divinational activities.

In the New Testament an even clearer picture emerges contrasting the forces of evil and of good. Christ represents the force of good while Satan and his demons represent the forces of evil. Sickness, illness, infirmities, were often seen as the effects of satanic work, while healing and deliverance were seen as God's work to undo the power of Satan (I John 3:8). The idea of power encounter is clearly seen in the life and ministry of Jesus. The role of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus is equally clear. It is in order that his ministry might continue through His disciples that he promises to them his ongoing presence and an empowerment (Matthew 28:20; Acts 1:8). In Acts of the Apostles we see this promise fulfilled. The apostles and disciples heal the sick, cast out demons, and free the oppressed. Spirit world activities such as magical practices and divination are recognized and challenged by the power of God (Acts 8,13,16,19). Paul teaches in Ephesians that principalities and powers are evil personal forces of darkness over which Christ is Victor (cf. Colossians 2:15). It is clear then that the church has been equipped and commissioned to carry on the ministry of Christ. He intends to overcome the evil manifestations of the spirit world in the natural realm through his people.

African Independent Churches

Evidence available from research conducted among African Christians has concluded that there is a dissatisfaction with the adequacy of Christianity as introduced by the early Western missionaries (Sundkler 1961; Welbourn 1961). This is especially true concerning issues relating to the spirit realm. Attesting to the importance of the spirit realm is the emergence and proliferation of African Independent Churches (AICs) in the Sub-Saharan region. Robert C. Mitchell, a professor in the Department of Sociology at Northwestern University and a specialist in African Independent Churches, explains the rise of the African Independent Churches. He charges that the cause

has been the general failure of missionaries to recognize the objective reality of the powers of evil which, in African society, manifest themselves in such things as witchcraft. Instead they tended to concentrate their attention on moral evils like polygamy, which were in the traditional African social structure, and not considered evil at all. In short, Christianity was too Western on the whole, too rationalistic and other worldly to gain confidence of its adherents at their deepest levels of experience. This showed up most plainly in those times of personal crisis, such as barrenness, sickness, when many baptized believers, thinking that Jesus Christ did not have any interest, or worse, the power, to improve their state of affairs, felt they had to visit the traditional healer. (Mitchell 1963:50)

While a discussion of the orthodoxy of African Independent Churches

deserves treatment, it is an issue which is beyond the scope of this study.

Suffice it to say the growth of these churches demands a closer examination by cross-cultural witnesses ministering in societies where AICs are present and growing (Abijole 1988:127-128).

The rise of African Independent Churches is predominantly a matter of Africans trying to make Christianity more relevant to them. In some circles it is felt that the AICs have a negative agenda, and they are even viewed as separatists who denounce mission churches. Others feel the AICs are politically motivated like the Messianic and prophetic ones who protest against colonialism and European domination. While there may be some elements of truth in these viewpoints, the main reason for the rise of these churches was the desire to meet the needs of Africans. A student of these church groups explains, "All three subtypes evidence doctrinal innovation, efforts at spiritual renewal and a reaction against the presence of Mission Churches" (Eliade 1987:82).

In 1979 there were about 8000 different African Independent Churches, claiming about 14 million adherents. Moreover, within Protestant and Roman Catholic churches, there are over 1000 popular religious movements each with a distinct name and committed membership (Barrett

1982:62).

The fascination and interest among Africans for these independent churches and religious movements can be traced to the kind of Christianity these churches provide, a spirituality which meets the needs of Africans. It is not that the present generation lacks animosity toward those missionaries whose attitudes were unbecoming of true Christian workers. Certainly a rejection of Western Christianity plays a role. It is true as well, however, that socio- economic and political issues have played a role in the emergence of the AICs. However, the rise and growth of the African Independent Churches is primarily due to the apparent relevance of their message.

In varying degrees, there is in virtually every AIC movement a central confession of Christ as Lord (using the traditional vernacular term for chieftancy), a marked resurgence of traditional African custom and worldview, and a strong affirmation of their right to be fully Christian and fully African, independent of foreign pressures (Barrett 1982:65). The question of relevance, to deal with issues that affect Africans directly, seems to be the primary issue and concern. Unfortunate and unintentional fruit was produced by a Western Christianity which disregarded African cultural issues. The emphasis on individualism and salvation for the soul alone

alienated African Christians from their community bonds. Abijole has argued that the African situation required a kind of Christianity that would take into consideration the cultural heritage of African people. His observation of the African Independent Churches' reaction to Western Christianity is of particular value:

But credit must be given to the African Independent Churches who rose up in protest and as a challenge to Missionary Christianity. They emphasize total dependence on prayers through Christ, they emphasize the positive belief that Christ's death and Resurrection has conquered evil forces. This teaching is more relevant for Africa than the Mission Churches. All Churches in Africa must hold fast to the message of the cosmic victory of Christ on the Cross over demonic powers. They must preach total and complete salvation and adequacy of Christ over all human problems. Christ must be proclaimed not only as Savior of the soul, but as Lord of lords and King of kings, Victor, Conqueror, Healer and all in all Savior who is sufficient for all human needs. Herein lies the relevance of Paul's theology of powers to the African Christian Churches. (Abijole 1988:127-128)

Among the Africans the universe is seen as a whole and a unit.

Spiritual forces are interwoven with the physical concrete aspects of the universe. Humans must interact with these spiritual beings at some level, either by traditional means or by the power of the gospel. Seen in this light, Abijole's conclusion makes sense. Only when the gospel addresses the entire universe in which the African person lives can one make sense out of the

gospel. The rise and growth of African Independent Churches is a legitimate attempt to meet this challenge by relating the gospel in its fullness to daily living. It is not surprising that the majority of the AICs have a focus on issues related to the spirit world.

The brand of Christianity that focused on mental assent and ignored the cultural context of the recipients left its adherents with essentially two religions. The gospel in its Western wrapper had an appeal, but spiritual needs still had to be met. As Africans attempted to practice both religious systems simultaneously, they felt a certain foreignness in Christianity because it ignored their culture. Mbiti explains this tragedy, taking his cue from Welbourn and Ogot (1966), and pointing out that the fundamental cause for the rise of African Independent Churches is that Western Christianity focused more on rules and regulations, relegating Christianity to Sundays. He writes,

Africans who traditionally do not know religious vacuum feel that they don't get enough religion from this type of Christianity, since it does not fill up their whole life and their understanding of the universe . . . Independent Churches are an attempt to find a place to *feel at home*, not only in worship but in the whole profession and expression of Christian faith. (1969:233-234)
(Italics mine)

Although in some cases Mbiti's submissions cannot be admitted, e.g. the notion that Africans have no concept of the future, he nevertheless raises

important issues. First, the entire spectrum of the African Christian's philosophical thought and religious background must be addressed by the gospel or else converts will necessarily find some religious system to meet their felt needs. Second, teaching must correlate with life issues and must be practical and directed if it is to produce corresponding behavior. To overemphasize the cognitive or intellectual aspect of Christianity at the expense of interaction with the relevant issues in any society is bound to create an imbalance.

African Theology

The development of African theologies may indicate that Western mission Christianity is inadequate and dissatisfying in Africa, especially when the questions raised by Africans and African culture are ignored. Granted, several factors contributed to its slow pace of development, yet the quest speaks of the need that African theologians recognize has gone unmet by the gospel in its present form.

An additional issue must be addressed: African theologians Mbiti (1975) and Idowu (1973) have been critical of the way in which foreign writers have referred to Africans and African religion. Derogatory terms like "heathen," "savage," "pagan," "primitive," "uncivilized," and "superstitious"

reflected the prevailing mentality which in turn determined the way the African culture was treated: it was to be largely ignored or to be replaced by the Western culture by means of evangelization. Furthermore, Mbiti and Idowu advocate an appreciation of African culture, correcting the unfortunate notion propagated by the early Christian missionaries that African culture was only evil and had to be rejected in favor of the Western Christian culture.

Cultural authenticity came to the forefront as a concern when in the 1970s President Mobutu of Zaire challenged the superiority of Western civilization and instigated a cultural revolution in Zaire. Because mission Christianity was so intertwined with Western civilization, many felt that Mobutu was persecuting Christianity (Warren 1965:37). Since that time, to their credit African theologians have set the agenda theologically. An African can be Christian without becoming culturally Western.

A common criticism leveled against African theologians is that they are elitist and abstract (Hastings 1976:50). This flaw can be easily remedied; their writings could be translated into local languages and simplified for instruction of common, average Christians (Bujo 1990:132-133). A further criticism has been raised by Tite Tienou who thinks these theologians have a tendency to be reactionary. Against a background of paternalism and

colonialism, they tend to be defensive considering the ills of imperialism (Tienou 1990:73).

Imasogie (1983), Gehman (1989), and Tienou (1990) are concerned about the methodology employed by these African theologians. The issue at stake is whether and to what extent there is continuity between African traditional religions and Christianity. There is seemingly a heavier emphasis on the Old Testament than on the New Testament, not surprising when one considers African culture finds its world in the Old Testament rather than in the New. While there is need to encourage Africans to be proud of their culture and take it seriously, the word of God must critique African culture as it must every culture.

African theologians have not made a sufficient, deliberate attempt to address the needs related to the spirit realm. While they have done an excellent job proving the reality of its existence, they have to move beyond this to show how the gospel can make a difference among believers who must deal with the issues of that realm.

Summary

Christianity was brought to Bugisu by CMS and Roman Catholic missionaries within the context of colonization. Besides the conflict that

ensued between the two sets of missionaries, Islam posed another competing dimension. Under this background of the expansion of Christianity, the gospel was brought to Bugisu in 1901.

An analysis of the attitude of the early Christian missionaries shows that either the missionaries were ignorant of or opposed to the Bagisu spirit world. When the spirit world was finally perceived to be real, the wrong measures were taken, such as appealing to the judiciary and stipulating and meting church discipline. The analysis further shows that even when efforts were made to address the handling of matters of the spirit world among the Christians such as holding synod meetings, the outcome was less than a complete articulation of the issues, condemnatory in nature, and without a viable solution. However, the reality of the spirit world is explicitly supported by Scripture, established by leading scholars and understood by African primal societies.

Although there have been some contributions from African theology, more needs to be said and done with regard to taking into consideration the cultural context of the people in evangelizing and discipling them. There are lessons to learn from and contributions to make to the work of the African Independent Churches, an expression of the need to address the spirit world.

CHAPTER 5

Possible Causes of the Problem of Reversions

We have looked at the coming of Christianity to Uganda among the Bagisu and the attitudes of the CMS missionaries who brought it. In this chapter we focus on the possible causes of reversions among the Bagisu. Many factors must be considered when addressing a problem as complex as this one. This study has attempted to identify several possible causes which may have contributed to the problem of reversions. The tendency among African Christians to revert to traditional means in order to deal with crises related to the spirit world has emanated from several sources.

Lack of Sufficiently Trained Personnel

As a possible explanation for the reversion to traditional religions, many missionaries pointed out that the inadequacy of missionaries and trained nationals could have been the reason for the reversion phenomenon. Rev. W. J. Rampley, for instance, notes that this state of affairs has to do with the ill-trained teachers and evangelists and lack of funds to train more workers. “Owing to the fact that younger generations were clamoring for enlightenment and baptism, it is no wonder that, with little instruction from the Word of

God, many adherents lapsed into the old life and leaders were faced with problems they were unable to solve” (CMS Outlook 1936:107).

Archdeacon Mathes, overwhelmed by the problem of reversions to traditional customs, explained the situation: “I feel strongly that the Church at home needs to realize afresh the stupendous problems and difficulties which attend the growth of an infant church born out of heathenism and still surrounded and intermingled with a large majority of heathen” (CMS Annual Report 1923-1924:84), and that

The shortage of European missionaries in this district is nothing less than a spiritual tragedy. Tens of thousands are being taught by untrained or only partly trained teachers, who ought to be at school themselves, learning the elements of the Gospel. (CMS Annual Report 1924-25:22)

Mathes’ observation is worth noting. As the number of converts increased, there was a decline in the number of teachers. For instance, the records of the Proceedings showed that the number of Bagisu readers rose from 6000 to 10,000 in 1915. The number of teachers fell during the same time from 150 to fewer than 100! (Proceedings 1915:64). Without question this would be an important factor affecting the depth and quality of Christianity in any given area. Twenty years later, a missionary from Bugisu detailed this problem at his mission station:

The Elgon mission is burdened by the problem of the numbers who came forward for baptism and even for confirmation, but they fail to make progress in the Christian faith as the clergymen are entrusted with the supervision of about 90 congregations, and some of the teachers are responsible for a dozen churches and schools. (CMS Annual Report 1935-36:13)

This unfortunate situation led to less and less instruction. Another missionary noted, “On the other hand some local clergy are inclined to baptize candidates too quickly, and where there is little opportunity for careful teaching afterwards they relapse into heathenism” (CMS Annual Report 1930-1931:7). According to this missionary, hope for a remedy to this situation lay in increasing the number of staff. He contended,

The Church in Africa is going forward steadily, in spite of being hampered everywhere by shortage of staff. In every area there are increasing possibilities of African leadership, if only more men and women can be trained to take advantage of the many opportunities; but for this, more European missionaries are needed. (CMS Annual Report 1937:1)

Similarly, writing while on furlough, Rev. A. J. Leech who served in Bugisu, reported on reversions to traditional ways, saying:

So the year has apparently been one of beginnings and of first things, but the beginnings were really made a long while ago in those days when the Rev. W. A. Crabtree and his successor Rev. J. B. Purvis toiled so unremittingly for the best welfare of an indifferent people, thus the work is sufficiently old for disappointments to have been experienced by reason of delinquencies and inconsistencies which have manifested themselves in some cases. (December 5, 1910, Annual Letter No. 288 1910)

While citing improvement in outward commitment like church attendance, Rev. Leech bemoaned the general trend which continued to characterize the church in Bugisu: reversion to traditional beliefs and practices.

Irresponsibility of Staff

Another possible explanation for the trend toward reversion was the irresponsibility of the local clergy. Mrs. Mathes, a resident missionary in Bugisu complained, "These demands [of supervising teachers] press more heavily on you, and worry us, because of the irresponsibility of the teachers and the difficulty of adequate supervision" (CMS Annual Report 1931:108). Not very much can be accomplished with undependable, irresponsible workers who need constant supervision! There could be reasons for this state of affairs which were not given in the report. Whatever the reason for irresponsibility, the consequences were not desirable, and the converts became the victims in this case.

The Un-Conversion of the Bagisu

In her article, "Focusing on Problems in Elgon Today," that appeared in the CMS Outlook for December 1936 (pp. 265-267), Mrs. Kitching added another reason for the reversion phenomenon. In the light of the massive reversion to traditional beliefs and practices in Bugisu and the surrounding

districts, she noted it was possible the Bagisu people had not been really converted in the first place. This conclusion was affirmed at a Diocesan Conference held in the summer of 1936, and a decision was made

to have a special campaign next year to try and deepen the spiritual life of the Christian church I am feeling more and more that we must aim now, at definite conversion and change of life in our nominal Christians. We have civilized and baptized them and made them members of the church, but many of us have done no 'converting' in the understood meaning of the word, and that I feel now should be our aim. (CMS Outlook December 1936:266-267)

It is laudable that this evaluation fostered a determination to convert the people in Bugisu; however, it is possible that conversion did take place, but not at the deepest level.

Loss of First Love

Some missionaries viewed reversions to traditional beliefs and practices as the loss of the converts' first love for Christ. Miss Davis, a missionary in Western Uganda wrote, "The work in Toro at present is rather disheartening, as so many of the Christians have lost their first love and have drifted back into heathenism, so there is a great need of spiritual revival" (CMS Annual Report 1936-1937:90). Also, in preparation for the Diamond Jubilee in Uganda, one missionary reported, "There is no zeal among converts and they are liable to succumb to the temptations of the easier path

in regard to old customs and traditions” (CMS Annual Report 1936-1937:71).

He continued,

From conversation with local clergy, these people remain nominal Christians, and even take active part in the Church’s affairs. The local clergy and catechists are powerless to deal with this. General denunciations on their part have little effect, and only individual treatment would produce results. (CMS Annual Report 1936-1937:71)

From Bugisu, Archdeacon Mathes concurred with these observations.

He notes that converts in Bugisu and neighboring districts with which he was involved were extremely enthusiastic but concluded that their enthusiasm and first love was lost in light of the fact that they had reverted to heathen traditions and customs, even though they continued to participate in church activities (CMS Proceedings 1922-1923:24).

It is possible that while the Bagisu had received the good news with joy and were enthusiastic about this new-found life, the new-found faith failed to address issues related to an area important to them, a situation that could be illustrated by the parable of the sower. The seed of the Word of God was sown among the Bagisu, who received it with joy, but when crises arose related to the spirit world, which the gospel did not address, the converts gave in to the temptations and reverted to their old ways. As one missionary put it, “All the clergy could do was to denounce such practices but were

impotent to deal with those issues” (CMS Annual Report 1936-1937:71).

Foreign Language Problem

Among the Bagisu who were Bantu, a missionary wrote, “There is no one of sufficient understanding to interpret; and the teachers find much difficulty in getting the people to give definite words to definite things” (Annual Letters 1901:251). It could take up to a month to find a Lugisu equivalent for an English word like love. As another missionary observed, differences in language created an obstacle to genuine Christianity among the Bagisu, so that in the face of heavy reversion to traditional practices, it was stated in the 1918 annual report, “Several of the missionaries refer to the serious hindrance to the work in the district (Bugisu) arising from the fact that it was carried on in Luganda, which few of the Bagisu understand” (CMS Proceedings 1918-1919:48).

As was the practice of the Anglican Church, the CMS used the Book of Common Prayer translated into Luganda. A missionary in residence reported, “The sacraments are administered and business is transacted at a central church at least once every three months and the Luganda Prayer Book is used everywhere except in South Bugisu but it is doubtful whether it is understood” (CMS Proceedings 1914-1915:74).

The problem of language was compounded when foreign teachers taught foreign concepts embodied in foreign books in a foreign language. It is likely that most Bagisu Christians did not understand what was taught. Consequently, in crisis situations, especially when the issue was related to the spirit world, and with only scanty knowledge of the truths of Christianity, reversion to traditional beliefs and practices was to be expected.

Mode and Content of Teaching

There are multiple causes for Christians reverting to traditional means in order to deal with issues related to the spirit world. Another possible factor identified in this study is the content and mode of teaching the gospel. Central to the teaching of Christianity in Uganda was the catechism embodied in the Book of Common Prayer. To be baptized, converts had to memorize all the answers to the questions in the catechism. A missionary wrote, “They [Bagisu converts] learn from the Catechism which the Bishop drew up for elementary teaching in Buganda, and now know about twenty answers correctly and many of the texts of Scripture attached to them” (CMS Annual Report 1902-1903:190). While emphasis on cognitive knowledge was important, the results of this method were disappointing. In addition to faulty methodology, both the concepts and the language were foreign; little

understanding was applied to real life situations. As Rev. H. W. Tegart noted concerning the converts who had mastered the catechism, “The Christians in very many cases are not much above the level of the heathen” (CMS Annual Report 1904-1906:76).

The High God Concept

John V. Taylor (1959:139) suggests that people conceived of God as they did their hero gods, as having no concern for practical morality. Thus, as long as the prescribed rites were observed, it was not understood as wrong to consult traditional specialists to solve problems. This certainly is a possibility and could have been true, especially in the earlier years of Christianity. However, as the problem persisted even among younger generations who had no idea of “tribal hero gods,” Taylor’s explanation seems inadequate.

Material Benefits

The Bagisu also turned to traditional problem solving methods because they misunderstood Christianity. Equating it with Western civilization, which was to be sought after, the promise of material benefits was at the heart of their apparent conversion; they were not in fact converted to Christ. In 1929 one missionary wrote, “Nowhere perhaps in Africa is the inrush of modern civilization and the tendency to organize life apart from God proving to be a

greater menace to the Church than in Uganda, where the forces of the old heathenism are still not far in the background” (CMS Annual Report 1928-1929:6).

The fact that Christianity and education were introduced in the same package sent a mixed message. For many Africans, Christianity meant Western civilization. European names given at baptism and the ability to read and write positioned an individual for a job at the mission station or with the government. Christianity became synonymous with a new status and access to wealth. To be a Christian elevated one above the rest of the clan or tribe and brought one into a new community of the elite of society. A resident missionary in Bugisu analyzed the situation among Bagisu,

The marked movement toward Christianity in the district [Bugisu] following the example of the Baganda who have entered the country in large numbers as administrators and teachers has great weight with the Bagisu, and a desire to become as Baganda was sometimes being given as the reason for asking for baptism. (CMS Proceedings 1918-1919:49)

In light of the reversion to traditional beliefs and practices, accepting the gospel for wrong reasons might well explain why this problem has persisted for so long. Material benefits negate the challenge Christ gave to those who would follow Him, “Take your cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34). Central to the gospel is the necessity of sacrifice and of perseverance under

hardship for the sake of the kingdom. These elements get lost when “conversion” is prompted by material benefits. Mbon (1987) has suggested that the motives Africans had for embracing Christianity were influenced by power, status and material benefits, items which they perceived to be present in Christianity as it was introduced by Western missionaries.

As is true in other societies, Africans loved social, economic and political power, and status. Christianity seemed to provide these. In the light of the available information, Mbon’s conclusions are supported by Parrinder’s observations:

The success of Christian mission has undoubtedly been partly due to material factors; to imperialism, but also to the prestige of Western ways and techniques with which missions have till now been associated. How far the welcome given to Christians may be compared with the expectations of cargo cults in Melanesia, is a question that has not been sufficiently investigated. In 1853 David Livingstone reported that with his arrival many people expected to be transformed into civilized men, possessing all the goods of 'the more favored portions of humanity.' (Parrinder 1962:154)

Although power, prestige and material benefits accompanied Christianity, Mbon contends that Christianity has not had the appropriate spiritual effect one should expect. In fact, Christianity has not displaced African traditional religion. The pre-colonial and colonial Africans accepted Western Cultural Christianity not because they considered this religion ‘better’ in terms of the

spirituality it presented to them, but primarily because of certain felt needs which they thought it could provide, to wit: the need to strengthen their social, economic, and political power, the desire to belong to a larger, universal socio-religious community, the psychological longing to be considered civilized because of their affiliation with Christianity, and the hunger for mission education with all its attendant promises and prospects for social and economic advancement. (Mbon 1987:49)

The Enlightenment

The rationalism, skepticism and anti-supernaturalism of the Enlightenment may have led to a de-emphasizing of the supernatural among the missionaries. The results of missionaries' efforts were both negative and positive. Western civilization brought schools and hospitals which were part of the missionary endeavor and a blessing to the Bagisu. Yet the dismissal of the spirit world coupled with the lack of the supernatural in Christian teaching yielded a situation in which the needs of the people went unmet. Max Warren, who has written about the revival movement, met William Nagenda, a student who had been expelled from Mukono. Warren observed that "the CMS had laid emphasis on the intellectual aspect of the gospel, thereby not seeing the struggles of the spirit world" (Quoted in Ward 1989:194). A direct

encounter with the spirits would have displayed the power of the gospel. Simon Barrington Ward, the then secretary of the CMS admitted, “. . . missionaries, more rational and formal in message and method, too seldom succeeded in suggesting such an encounter” (Church 1981:14-15).

The Enlightenment’s possible contribution to the Bagisu reversion problem can be noted in three instances. The first involves theology, those liberalizing tendencies which had roots in England at Cambridge University (Church 1981:138). We may point out that the recognition of the spirit world, or the lack of it, has no direct connection with either conservative or liberal theological positions. In this case, however, the resignation of one CMS missionary, Miss Mabel Ensor, is directly connected to liberalism, which tended to down play the supernatural (Welbourn 1965:24). Church recorded in his diary regarding Mabel Ensor’s resignation:

Her importance lies in the example of renewal which she set; and in drawing attention to the “modernist” teaching of [the Mukono Theological] College. This she particularly associated with the Welsh CMS missionary John Jones, against whom she directed a pamphlet provocatively entitled, “The Wolves are out Tonight.”. . . This was to become a major issue in the 1941 crisis, when Jones was Warden of Bishop Tucker College. (Ward 1989:197)

The second instance involves the opposition to the revival movement and the expulsion of students at Mukono Theological College by CMS

missionaries in 1941 (Ward 1989:199). The revival movement was an attempt to revitalize the church and to deal with issues of the spirit world.

Archbishop Luwum, writing in the foreword to a book marking a century of Christianity in Uganda, testified regarding the revival movement and its opponents:

At first the movement appeared as a threat to the traditional church and the first converts were accused of being against the church's hierarchy. For example, many of the ordinary clergy and church members did not respond to its message with enthusiasm as they knew that the moral and spiritual demand of the Gospel of Renewal was too high and many preferred to hide behind their clericalism. Those whose lives were changed were "on fire" to win others for Christ. The Revival was, and continues to be a source of blessing in the Church. I remember very well when, as a parish priest I talked to my bishop, a CMS missionary, and he confessed to me that to him the only thread of life and hope that kept the church alive in Acholi was through the *Balokole* [revival movement members]. (1978:xiv)

This movement was opposed by both local clergy and CMS missionaries. Its emphasis on walking in the light of Christ, forgiveness by His blood and believers gathering in groups during the week was seen as a threat to the Anglican establishment. Yet this was the "thread of life" to the church. I submit it is because of this revival movement that the reversions among Bagisu Christians were fewer in number than among the Zulus, Akans and Anufo as cited from Congdon (1985), Busia (1961), and Kirby's (1985)

research respectively.

Third, the effect of the Enlightenment is also illustrated by two of those first ordained as African deacons in the Anglican Church in Uganda who later broke away. One of them, Kate Mugema, started the “Society of the Almighty God” locally known as *Katonda Ainza Byona* (KOB) meaning “God is Almighty.” Central to his doctrine was healing without the Western medication introduced by missionaries. His argument was based on the God who was all powerful; he would heal without Western medication. For Mugema, the supernatural was part and parcel of the gospel, a direct challenge to the missionaries for whom hospitals were God’s method of healing the sick. It should be clarified that the point here is not to critique Western medical treatment; rather to observe that illness related to spiritual causes cannot be treated effectively by Western medication, in which case Mugema was right in his view.

Another deacon, Spartas, who broke away from the Anglican Church, pioneered the African Orthodox Church of Uganda. His motive for breaking away had to do with power; he resented missionary domination (Tuma 1978:xvii). Referring to the rejection by nationals of the form of Christianity introduced by missionaries, Archbishop Luwum noted,

One further area brought out clearly by one writer here is related to the indifference to the Christian Gospel preached by the traditional Church, i.e., the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. One group -- the Bamalaki (*Katonda Ainza Byona*-- Society of the Almighty God) -- did not believe in the use of medicine. The leader, Kate Mugema, was constantly working with the *Bataka* group against the foreign elements. . . . Spartas who was active during this period advocated the isolation of Africans from the dominant and paternalistic foreign missionaries in Uganda. (1978:xv)

J. V. Taylor (1957:137) found a village in Uganda which had been evangelized by the CMS missionaries and local evangelists but where church members engaged in traditional beliefs and practices to deal with problems related to the spirit world. He blames this state on the fact that missionaries had “lost touch with the real pulse of the church life [which is struggling with the problems related to the spirit world] and no longer know where the points of tension and decision [exist] in the experience of ordinary Christians.” In discussing such entities as ghosts, witchcraft, sorcery, and evil spirits he laments, “The official teaching in the churches and schools tends to deny, or at least ignore, the objective existence of such beings on the grounds of a superficial ‘scientific’ outlook; but in the Bible, on the other hand, Christians find them taken quite seriously” (Taylor 1958:207). Welbourn’s observation is hard to ignore:

The early missionaries brought with them not only the Christian gospel. They brought also an attitude which was characteristic

more of nineteenth century scientific rationalism than of Christian faith. They tended to deny the existence of such mystical forces as magic, curses, witchcraft or ancestral spirits. (1965:37)

Pietism

Pietism was a historical movement which arose within the Protestantism of continental Europe toward the end of the seventeenth century. It has been described as consisting of individuals who were

basically interested in religious renewal of the individual, belief in the Bible as the unfailing guide to faith and life, a complete commitment to Christ which must be evident in the Christian's life, the need for Christian nurture through the faithful use of appropriate devotional aids, including sermons and hymns, and finally a concern to apply the love of Christ so as to alleviate the social and cultural ills of the day. (Sattler 1986:3)

While missionary activity did not begin with Pietism, "It was Pietism, however, which was a prime mover in sending theologically trained people for the express purpose of evangelizing other peoples in non-Christian cultures" (Sattler 1986:22). The five basic principles of Pietistic missionary activity noted by Sattler include cultural sensitivity, efforts to indigenize, personal salvation, availability of Scriptures in people's own language and emphasis on literacy. While some Pietists like the Moravian missionaries were sensitive to the "customs and rights of the cultures they evangelized," others did not always put into practice this basic principle (Sattler 1986:22).

Some were so passionate about soul winning that somehow they lost sight of the larger cultural context and failed to recognize the importance of culture in the process of evangelization.

The tendency of Pietism to over-emphasize the salvation of the soul influenced missions. The lone driving force of many missionaries was to save souls with no regard for their context. People of other lands were seen as lost, in darkness, pagan, heathen and in need of salvation. While the salvation of the individual soul is extremely important in the missionary endeavor, taking it as the sole purpose is reductionistic. In the case of the Bagisu, the spirit world, so central to their worldview and religious system, was either ignored or rejected as evil. This is in part due to the form of Christianity introduced by missionaries and perpetuated by national pastors, teachers, and evangelists.

Pietism also clashed with the group orientation of the Bagisu. Traditionally, decisions were made by the group, each individual contributing a point of view until a consensus was reached. Individuals did not act as isolated units. Pietism sprang out of the Western individualistic culture. Consequently, its evangelism methods targeted individuals to make independent decisions. Schools and hospitals were the main tools employed

by the CMS to carry out evangelism. The strategy was that individuals would become converted when they came to schools and hospitals. These tools, legitimate in themselves, tended to pull individuals out of their cultural setting and place them in a new cultural context, that of the Western missionary.

However, when there was a crisis, Bagisu went back to their traditional religion because they found the new religion had no solution to the problems related to the spirit world.

Summary

Various possible factors that may have contributed to the problem of reversions among the Bagisu Christians have been identified in this chapter, including lack of sufficiently trained personnel, irresponsibility of staff, the incomplete conversion of the Bagisu, loss of first love, foreign language problems, material benefits as motivation for conversion, and mode and content of teaching. Others are the reductionism of Pietism and the rationalism of the Enlightenment, which may have contributed to a lack of appreciation for the Bagisu worldview and recognition of the spirit world.

CHAPTER 6

Field Research Results of Reversions among the Bagisu

In the field research conducted among the Bagisu, I used Kirby's interview schedule. Unlike Kirby who interviewed both Muslim and Christian converts, we interviewed Anglican Christians only. In addition to the use of research assistants who interviewed the Bagisu Anglican Christians, I interviewed the two Anglican pastors in the light of the results of the instrument.

On the interview form, four alternatives were open to the respondent. The first alternative was "orthodox," referring to the prescribed manner in which the Anglican Church would expect a Christian to respond. For example, a person in need would consult a pastor, utilize the hospital or contact a government agency for a solution.

The second alternative was the traditional manner of dealing with the particular issue in question. For example, in most cases the diviner would be consulted. He or she would prescribe the ritual to be performed and the treatment or charms for warding off the evil spiritual forces. Since consulting diviners was forbidden by the Anglican church, divination was conducted in

secrecy. In 1961, the Anglican church went so far as to urge the government to enact a national law forbidding such practices. Despite their disapproval, a large percentage of Christians still resorted to these traditional means secretly. Because the Anglican Church had no solution to spirit related issues, the number of Christians engaging in these activities is not surprising.

The third alternative available to the respondent was a combination of orthodox and traditional means to deal with crises related to the spirit world. As a “cover,” the sick person(s) would go to the hospital in the case of illness, but at the same time family members would consult the diviner. The use of the Book of Common Prayer, the Bible, and Holy Water were common “additions” to hospital treatment and traditional methods. This alternative was fairly popular, especially among the educated in Bugisu.

The fourth alternative was that the issue was not applicable: either the respondent had never experienced that particular crisis, or there had been a permanent solution to the crisis. This alternative constituted a sizable percentage of the results gathered from the questionnaires.

When Kirby administered the questionnaire to the Anufo of Ghana, he divided the questions into clusters of community, household and individual. In this study I clustered them as life cycle questions, socio-economic and

natural/supernatural issues. This classification seemed logical for the purpose of this study. (See Appendix 2 for the breakdown of the results). The results are as follows:

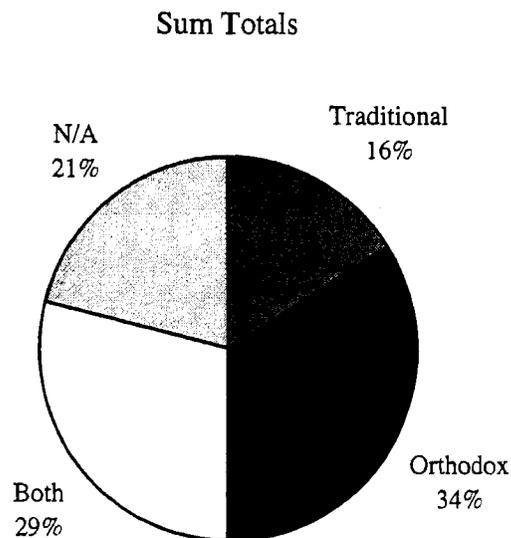


Figure 8: Summary of Responses to Questions from Kirby's Instrument

Survey Results

A casual look at these results would indicate that most respondents dealt with crises either in church or through the Western establishments like hospitals and courts. However, a closer look reveals that the majority of the Christians responded in an unorthodox manner. As much as traditional responses were the least, 16%, when we add to this percentage the syncretistic responses, 29%, the number 45% exceeds that of orthodox

responses. The picture changes even more when we consider questions for which the respondents had no solution (21%) because either their worldview did not supply a solution or a solution had not occurred to them. Therefore, no thought had been given toward determining the course of action. If we eliminated this no solution category, the percentage of Christians dealing with crises in other ways than Christian will rise to 57%. This figure is significantly high considering the span of time since the introduction of Christianity in Bugisu. These results are similar to those of Okoye (1980) and Busia (1961) cited below: most of the responses are traditional or syncretistic.

Having analyzed the questionnaire as a whole, we will analyze the three sections of the questionnaire, clustered along life cycle, natural/supernatural and socio-economic issues.

Life Cycle Issues

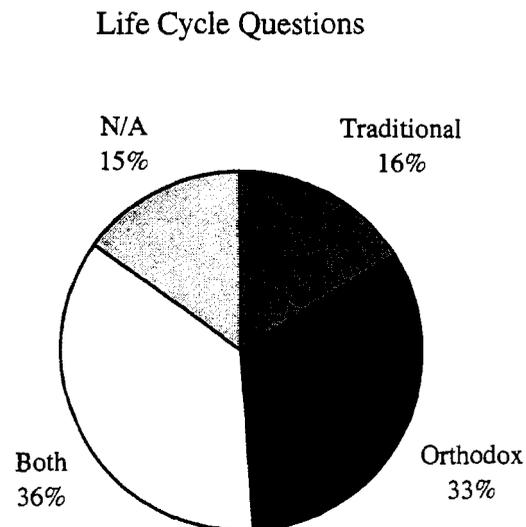


Figure 9: Summary of Responses to the Life Cycle Questions From Kirby's Instrument

The results of these three clusters are almost similar. For life cycle questions, 16% responded traditionally, 36% responded that they combine traditional and orthodox means to deal with issues of life, 33% dealt with these changes in life in an orthodox manner, while 15% had no solution at all or the issue did not apply to them. When we combine traditional solutions with syncretistic ones we have 52% or 63% without the no solution category. This high score may be accounted for by the high value Bagisu place on human life. For Bagisu Christians humans are central in relation to all else in

the universe. Because human life is valued so highly, it seems, they are not willing to risk using inadequate solutions in these very important areas.

Socio-Economic Issues

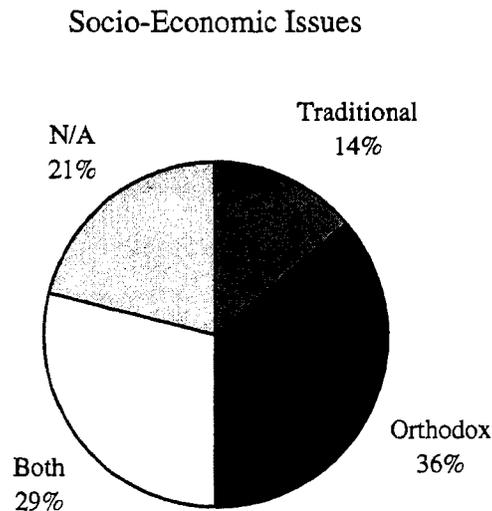


Figure 10: Summary of Responses to Socio-Economic Questions from Kirby's Instrument

In the socio-economic issues, 14% responded that they deal with such problems traditionally, while 29% indicated that they combine both traditional and orthodox methods. The largest percentage, 36%, handled these issues in an orthodox manner. Perhaps this result is best accounted for by the fact that socio-economic issues are not life threatening; one can afford to take more risks. And, 21% had no solutions or were not affected by the issues raised on

the questionnaire. These results reveal the order of priorities among the Bagisu. Presuming that socio-economic issues are not life threatening, the Bagisu can utilize orthodox methods even if there are some risks involved. These findings are similar to those of Okoye (1992) who reported that to Africans, health and family ranked highest in importance while employment ranked lowest. This priority helps explain why the highest percentage of orthodox solutions to the crises of life were from the socio-economic cluster.

Natural/Supernatural Issues

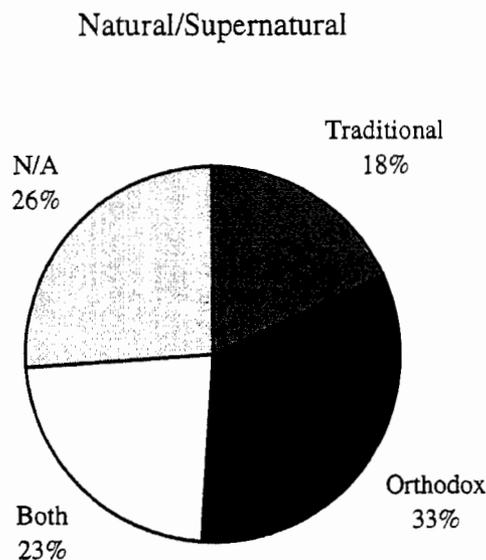


Figure 11: Summary of Responses to Natural/ Supernatural Questions from

Kirby's Instrument

On the issues closely related to the spirit world, 33% dealt with crises of life in the manner prescribed by the Anglican Church and government. The lowest number, 18%, of the respondents dealt with issues traditionally. It should be noted that while only 14% in the socio-economic cluster dealt with their problems in the traditional manner, 23% handled their spirit related issues in a syncretistic manner, and 26% involved those who did not know what to do with the issues or for whom the issue did not apply. Two results are surprising. First, it is in this cluster that we have the highest percentage, 26%, showing no solution or not applicable, compared with 15% in the life cycle cluster and 21% in the socio-economic cluster. The issues raised in the spirit realm, perhaps, are of such a nature that people feel that few or no solutions are forthcoming from the church. In many instances, even traditional religion and the Western establishment in the form of courts, schools, and hospitals offer no solutions. This perception would explain why the highest percentage of no solution or not applicable is in this cluster. Second, it is in this cluster that the traditional or syncretistic responses are the lowest, 41% compared with the socio-economic cluster, 43% and 52% in the life cycle cluster, as the comparison in figure 12 below shows:

Cluster	Traditional	Orthodox	Syncretistic	None/Not Applicable
Life-Cycle	16	33	36	15
Socio-Economic	14	36	29	21
Natural/Supernatural	18	33	33	26

Figure 12: Comparison of Clusters from Field Research

Interpretation of Field Research Data

Looking at the questionnaire results as a whole, 45% of the respondents dealt with life crises by traditional or syncretistic means, revealing that Christianity, as introduced by the CMS, has not penetrated the Bagisu to the core of their being or worldview. If we eliminate the no solution category, the figure rises to 57%. We can conclude that the present form of Christianity does not address issues and questions that affect Bagisu Christians in their daily life. The worldview of the Bagisu recognizes the existence and activities of spirits, ancestors, divinities, and mystical forces in the universe, all of which come to the foreground when life cycle events occur. The supernatural realm affects life in the natural world and must therefore be addressed by cross-cultural witnesses.

Fortunately, the picture is not altogether dark. The light of the gospel in conjunction with Western civilization has been shining among the Bagisu.

Thus 34% of the respondents indicated they dealt with the crises of life by orthodox Christian means. To this extent, the form of Christianity introduced among Bagisu has penetrated their culture. The Church, which has made an impact upon Bagisu Christians, must be commended for its great work. Because of these efforts we see hope for the Church in Bugisu and for those in similar primal societies. However, there is much work to be done to increase the number of orthodox responses.

We may be encouraged by the fact that 34% of the responses utilize orthodox responses to life's problems. We must remember, however, that these are self-responses, and actual practice might be less orthodox. Knowing that the Anglican Church disapproves of traditional solutions, respondents might have been tempted to give orthodox responses to appear as good church members.

For every problem the Bagisu encountered, their culture had a solution. We cannot assume every solution has the desired results, but the Bagisu worldview does attempt to deal with problems of life as they arise.

A prominent feature among the respondents was the centrality of ritual activity. Many of the rituals are established like harvest rituals, child naming, circumcision and those surrounding death. Some rituals are public events;

others are private. Some rituals are prescribed by specialists especially those related to misfortune resulting in sickness, loss of life or property, and failure of fertility in humans, animals and crops. They involve consultation with specialists who prescribe the appropriate measures. At the appropriate time, the rituals are enacted and no one doubts their efficacy, no one asks questions. The meaning has been established in the minds of the Bagisu and these rituals are taken for what they represent.

Regarding the church's response, two streams were discerned. First, the majority of the respondents said that the church has nothing to do with the Bagisu tradition. In fact, Bagisu tradition is referred to as *byekyikafiri*, pagan. At baptism, the Bagisu candidates were encouraged to reject all their past associations with the Bagisu ritual activities, which were understood as the work of Satan. The church condemned all activities relating to the spirit realm.

It was reported that the local church leadership knew about the parishioner's involvement but rather than providing real answers, they reported these offenses to the government, which banned any activities related to issues precipitated by the spirit realm. For instance, witchcraft was outlawed in Uganda. Offenders were imprisoned; Christians were

disciplined, and some were excommunicated.

Second, a small minority reported that they were encouraged by a pastor of another church outside their area to incorporate traditional solutions into their way of life. They said his reasoning was based on Jesus' words in Matthew 5:17: "I have not come to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill." The pastor interpreted this passage to mean that Christianity had not come to displace the Bagisu traditions, but to affirm them and make them more meaningful. Generally, however, the respondents adhered to what the Anglican position states: traditional rites are evil.

The Anglican Church, on the other hand, has done little to address this area that is the warp and woof of the Bagisu. Two Bagisu Anglican pastors who were interviewed, both trained on a higher level, i.e., a diploma, confessed that they were not taught anything to do with issues of the spirit world. They said that while they believed that spirits existed, as church leaders they acted as though spirits did not exist. They confessed that occasionally they have run into ritual activities at night, but since it was dark they could not tell who was involved. One pastor reported that on two occasions his parishioners had invited a diviner to extract what was believed to be substances of sorcery. This was done during the day but the

parishioners told the pastor they had guests who were distant relatives and acted a little strange. The parishioners did not want their pastor to know, although the pastor knew exactly what was going on.

The two pastors admitted they did not have any specific teachings on such issues to help their parishioners. They said they understood clearly that God forbids practices of witchcraft, divination, ancestral worship, and performance of ritual activities which accompany events surrounding the life cycle. The church rules were clear on these issues; believers knew what the church taught because at baptism and confirmation they took vows to the effect that they would not engage in such activities.

I shared the results of the interviews with the two pastors and asked them to comment on each of the problems in the questionnaire. They said they knew their parishioners were involved in traditional beliefs and practices in order to deal with most of the problems. Both of them further confessed they did not know how to deal with the issues of witchcraft, divination, death, ancestors, misfortune, infertility etc. They said their duty was to do their best to enforce church discipline against those members who acted contrary to the church's expectation to abandon Bagisu traditional beliefs and practices. However, since almost all these activities are clandestine, it is hard to find the

culprits. One of the pastors confided with the researcher that his wife had been told of a case of an outstanding Christian couple who had had eight girls in a row and had been helped by a specialist finally to have two sons. In the Bagisu culture, children are extremely important as they are the ones who will remember their parents and the clan ancestors. But most importantly, boys are the ones who carry the family name to subsequent generations. In the case of this couple, as thankful as they were that God had blessed them with children, they still needed boys for the sake of the family lineage.

The pastors also noted with satisfaction that the results were not as bad as they had anticipated. When asked whether they were surprised at the results, the older pastor responded with confidence, "God's Word cannot return to him void; it will accomplish what he sends it for." He commented further, "the Word of God is like a hammer and sharper than any two edged sword."

Studies Done in the Category of Christian Reversions

Scholars like Kirby (1985), Congdon (1985), and Busia (1961) have attempted to understand the causes of the complex phenomenon of Christians reverting to traditional beliefs and practices. They have also suggested possible corrective measures.

The study conducted by Congdon (1985:296 ff.) found that among the Zulu of South Africa 70% of all professing Christians believed that ancestors were beneficial to them; Zulu success depended on the ancestors, so contact was maintained with them while at the same time the Christian faith was being professed. Congdon shares the same view of this study: the worldview “core” of these Zulus has not been touched by Christianity, resulting in a dual allegiance.

In another study, Professor K. A. Busia notes an interesting phenomena of reversion to “pagan” beliefs and practices in times of crisis. “The experience was all the more stunning when the converts concerned were not the more recent ones, but Christians of long standing, sometimes with fine records of conspicuous service and loyalty” (1961:86). He affirmed,

My own studies carried out in Ghana provide ample evidence of the persistence of, or the return to, old rites and beliefs such as pouring libations, the worship of ancestors or practices based on belief in witchcraft or in the power of gods and spirits, even in areas where the Christian church has been established for over a hundred years. (1961:86)

Reporting on a conference of Christian leaders which he conducted in 1959,

Busia notes,

After a long discussion and a frank exchange of views and experiences, the participants agreed with remarkable unanimity that certain practices which were contrary to Christian belief and teaching continued among Christians, and that in some instances

there was a return to traditional observances, particularly at such critical moments of life as birth, illness, grave misfortune or death. (1961:86)

Professor Busia's observation lends support to the thesis of this study: the spirit world and its related needs have not been recognized and, subsequently, have not been addressed by the present form of Christianity. This lack of attention or solution explains the reversions to old traditions and practices among the Bagisu. Busia further argues:

However, it is to one specific aspect of the general problem of the encounter between Christianity and African cultures that I wish to draw attention. I shall do so by beginning rashly with the general statement that all religious systems [of thought, belief and practice] imply, implicitly or explicitly, concepts of man, nature, society and the supernatural; and that in Africa and, from what I have been told, in Asia also, there has not been a sufficient awareness of the encounter between Christianity and traditional beliefs and practices at this level. (1961:87)

Busia demonstrates that African converts come to Christianity with a well-developed cosmology and that these assumptions "influence choices and actions, particularly during critical moments of life" (1961:87-88). He laments in the light of this situation that "those who have been responsible for the propagation of the Christian gospel in other lands and cultures have not shown sufficient awareness of the need for an encounter between the Christian religion and the cosmology of peoples outside European culture and

tradition” (Busia 1961:88). The present study concurs with his conclusion that “It is this which has made Christianity either alien or superficial, or both in Africa” (Busia 1961:88).

Sample Issue from the Questionnaire: Infertility

From the questionnaire the issue of infertility with which I have interacted was selected so as to show the relationship between the traditional and the orthodox means used by the Bagisu when dealing with this crisis.

The main concern about infertility stems from the understanding held by most Africans concerning living forever, termed by Mbiti as personal immortality. Mbiti states that procreation is the surest way to guarantee that one will not be cut off from personal immortality (1970:33). Accordingly, one of the main causes of broken homes in Africa is infertility. Mbiti, writing from the East African experience, observes that a marriage is not considered complete without children (Mbiti 1975:104-105). Uka summarizes the seriousness of barrenness in Africa:

The inability to produce offspring is considered one of the greatest misfortunes in African societies. Barrenness, sterility and the unmarried state are threats to human existence and are therefore condemned by many West African societies. So serious is this calamity that in some African societies childless people cannot become ancestors after death. (1991:191)

Unfortunately women are the victims in this scenario. Uka (1991:92) notes

that “In traditional African societies, infertility is nearly always attributed to an attack of witchcraft on the woman.” There are however, other reasons for sterility besides witchcraft. It might be a curse from an aunt who has not been given a fair share of the dowry from the marriage. In some cases the dowry may not have been paid or, perhaps it might be that the ancestors have not been placated. Whatever the explanation, infertility is not simply a natural phenomenon. Among the Bagisu, the most common cause is *kuboha* (tie the womb), where some unhappy relative has manipulated magic to arrest the process of fertility. The woman’s belt is obtained secretly and tied in a knot with the appropriate ritual. As long as the belt remains knotted and hidden, the woman will not be able to conceive; meanwhile she doesn’t know why she can’t conceive. Diviners are consulted to determine the cause. The diviner locates the knotted belt and “unties the womb” (*kugangulula*), thus counteracting the magic. The diviner’s expertise requires a long process, but the final goal is to bring about the possibility of conception. Uka describes the situation:

In traditional African societies, therefore, barrenness leads women through all sorts of ordeals such as being ridiculed in society and offering sacrifices to different deities whom they believe are the cause of the problem. They go from one diviner to another in search of possible cause and a quick cure; it leads them to spend their resources in buying materials for sacrifices and for paying diviners; sometimes it compels them to do

something to restrain their husbands from divorcing them.
(1991:192)

Very real spiritual concerns are intertwined with issues such as infertility. The church can and must address these. Uka's advice is appropriate: "They should also be introduced to the Christian liberating faith which can break all demonic covenants and yokes entered into indirectly or directly by the person" (1991:193).

If infertility is a common problem in the congregation, prayers for infertility should be common as well. Churches must not only address the spiritual aspects of the infertility issue but must also encourage both husband and wife to undergo medical examinations. Medical science has identified several specific physiological causes for infertility involving both male and female. Medical remedies may often provide a solution to the problem.

Since this problem has both physiological and spiritual dimensions, both medical science and spirit world tools need to be employed. However, it is possible that even after both the spiritual and medical concerns have been addressed, infertility may persist. Rather than resorting to polygamy or divorce, adoption is a viable and better alternative.

With the possibility of help from medical science or the counsel and ministry of the church, one wonders why people do not make use of these

services more frequently. This brings us back to the question of this study, “Why do the Bagisu Christians continue to consult their traditional specialists in times of crises even after so many years of Christianity among them?”

Professor Uka’s response is accurate:

Africans believe that God is essentially good, merciful, holy, all-knowing and present everywhere. That is why they hardly accuse Him of being responsible for infertility. Therefore they tend to believe in witchcraft, charms and in evil spirits [including ancestors] as being responsible for infertility in both man and woman. (1991:197)

His response explains in part why we have a high percentage of Christians continuing to use traditional means to deal with such problems as infertility. Professor Idowu has rightly observed that “It is now becoming clear to the most optimistic evangelists that the main problem of the church in Africa today is divided loyalties of most of her members between Christianity with its Western categories and practices on one hand, and the traditional religion on the other” (1973:205-206). A connection between the two needs to be made.

Summary

This study has established that Bagisu Christians continue to utilize traditional means to deal with those crises confronted in daily life. About 50% of them responded that they use traditional means or combine traditional

with orthodox Christian ways to deal with the problems of life. Clearly the results indicate that the church must seek to understand and to interact with the Bagisu worldview if it is to provide solutions for the issues the Bagisu must face. Apparently Christianity has not addressed significant issues among the Bagisu especially those related to the spirit world.

The consequences of this attitude are partly responsible for the reversions among the Bugisu. Reyburn noted that “they [missionaries] did so [ignored the spirit world] partly because their own history had proved for them that, given enough scientific knowledge and rational thought, all non-rational phenomena could be disposed of as simply superstition or the work of Satan” (1978:81).

Orthodox responses given by the Bagisu to the questionnaire should be an encouragement for cross-cultural witnesses who now can build on the successes and address the failures of the past. The CMS has much of which it can be proud, but also much to learn. One should praise the Lord for accomplishing his purposes among the Bagisu in spite of the shortcomings of the way the gospel was presented.

CHAPTER 7

Toward a Solution to the Problem of Reversions

It has been established in the preceding chapters that reversions to former, non-Christian life alternatives among the Bagisu are widespread. An explanation with multiple reasons for the reversions has been advanced. What is now needed is a prescription for the remedy, and this is our chief concern in this chapter. Several models will be proposed, each of which emphasizes an aspect which can be used as part of a comprehensive approach to minimize the problem of reversions. All them are based on Scripture, are known to recognize the reality of the spirit world and have been implemented among the Maasai, Uganda, and some Zambian communities. No single model is sufficient in itself to minimize the problem of reversions. However, from each one we can glean principles in constructing a solution to the problem of reversion. These principles include understanding the following: the importance of ritual activity, the place of the supernatural, the need to take the worldview seriously, the role of *maduli* (small groups within the Bagisu community), and the need to teach the Word.

Conversion and Confessional Model: Zambia

When confronted with spirit possession, Father Ganly implemented an approach which emphasized conversion and confession. He had been in Zambia for 15 years. His initial reaction when confronted by parishioners who sought help concerning spirit possession was, "We Christians do not believe in them" (Ganly 1987:309). Father Ganly, like Hiebert (1982), was a Western missionary who had been influenced by the Enlightenment. Perhaps the reasoning was that "Such entities as evil spirits did not exist where Western civilization had impacted." However, while serving in the USA, Ganly came to acknowledge the reality of the spirit world and its operations from a film based on Aymara Indians in Peru where the missionary had "decided to engage them on their own terms" (Ganly 1987:345). He testifies to what the missionary in the film did in the Aymaran situation:

Treating their native religion as basically the expression of a primordial revelation of God, he set about learning as much about it as he could. When the people understood that he was not attacking their religion, they began to share their deepest and most fundamental beliefs with him. (Ganly 1987:345)

After this experience, Father Ganly decided to listen more carefully to the people and to seek to better understand their situation. Consequently there was an openness between him and the Zambian people. One day he was

confronted with a spirit possession case which threatened the entire village with death. A woman had “said that as she passed the junction of two paths in the forest, she had been touched by an evil spirit. A coldness crept over her whole body. From that day forward, she began to sicken” (Ganly 1987:347). After having been treated in the hospital without success, the woman was taken by relatives to the diviner. The diviner in turn determined the cause of illness as spirit possession, but added that he was not able to cure her, as it was too late. Indicating the extreme danger of the situation, he warned, “She is going to die, and before the spell runs its course, some of you are going to die, too” (Ganly 1987:348).

These events were narrated to Father Ganly by the messenger from the village. The messenger pleaded with the priest, “Please come before we all die” (1987:348). Asking why he had come to Father Ganly, the messenger responded, “Because we hear that you are a different *Muzungu* (European). You know and understand our beliefs and you do not condemn them. You even praise what our ancestors have passed on to us” (1987:348).

Arriving at the village two days later, Ganly found the entire village waiting for him. After hearing the narrative above repeated to him, he responded that he was sent to Zambia by Jesus Christ the Son of God who

died to take away sin and death, putting life in their place. He drew from their own myth to bring forth his message:

Not long ago I learned the Kikaonde story of the creation of the world. In that story, your ancestors tell you that evil came into the world because of disobedience to God. That is what my ancestors told me, too. (1987:348)

After reading to them from Genesis chapter three on the Fall he commented,

So you see that we Christians believe that evil came into the world because of sin, too. Now, witchcraft is evil. Therefore, if we wish to remove evil, we must remove sin. This is the way we are going to do it. (1987:349)

Emphasizing sin as the root of evil and focusing on the finished work of Christ on the cross, Father Ganly challenged the entire crowd to confess their sins one by one as he assisted them. He wrote, “In all, I was very impressed by the frankness of their confessions” (1987:349). This episode is similar to what we read in Acts 19 when confession prompted believers to bring all their magic paraphernalia and burn them publicly. While Father Ganly did not go to this extent, he employed a different approach which accomplished the same objective, i.e., the people involved needed to do something which would stand in their memory as a rite of passage. Since conversion involves turning from sin and all satanic operations to God, this practice is in order.

As they prayed together for God’s help, he asked them again, “Do you

wish to leave sin behind and follow God's path again?" They all replied, "We do" (1987:349). Aware of the importance of covenants in the African culture, Father Ganly challenged the villagers to act:

Now we have to make a sign for God and for ourselves that we really mean what we say. For a sign I want you to take nine *bilukwa* (grain baskets) of millet from the village granary and give them to any poor, elderly people whom you know in the surrounding villages. When you've done that, the spell is finished. Then send me a stalk of bananas to pay for my expenses in coming here. (1987:349)

The priest acted in faith, applying one biblical metaphor to another new situation, trusting God to honor the application. The report was thrilling. The entire community of Christ participated joyfully, sharing their produce and thus sealing the covenant. The spell was broken and the light of Jesus by the power of his death and resurrection shone in that Zambian village.

Didactic and Sacramental Model: Tanzania

A second model of ministry in an African setting focuses on the thorough teaching of God's Word. Rev. Stanley Benson shares from his pastoral experience among the Maasai in the Arusha Region of Tanzania how his ministry touched many lives. Taking his cue from Martin Luther's commentary on Mark 16:16, he saw new meaning in baptism:

Baptism works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe, as the

Word and promise of God declares. Where there is forgiveness there is life and salvation. (1980:60)

Pastor Benson did not believe that baptism by itself had much significance to his situation. Rather, as he learned from Martin Luther in the fourth part of the large Catechism, faith on the part of the believer is the critical component. Luther's words maintained that baptism is no empty symbol "but the effect accompanies it; but where faith is lacking, it remains a mere unfruitful sign" (Benson 1980:61).

With this conviction Benson states his thesis categorically, "This insistence on faith of baptism is now a first stand for me as it has been verified time and again in that those persons thoroughly instructed in a baptismal faith have had staying power over the force of the demon(s)" (Benson 1980:61). He confesses that as a Westerner who once looked at spirits or demons as superstition or described demon possession as "a psychological malady of a schizophrenic nature," Benson now boldly asserts that demons are real. He continues:

As a result of the experience of working with possessed persons, my theological and biblical stance has been altered. I say this in all humility as I have seen a new power of the working of Christ in His ministry to people. (1980:58)

For Benson, baptism is at the apex of the cure for demon possession. The

teaching of God's Word is central in a process which involves thorough instruction of the baptismal candidates. Those who are possessed by spirits are brought to small groups where the Word is taught along with singing and prayers:

The evangelist and elders of these small Christian groups, acting on their biblical faith, gathered the group together for prayers and hymn singing over the possessed person. . . . After a period of time, a peace settled over the possessed person and a normality returned to the person. (1980:56-57)

Notice the emphasis on the participation of all believers in Christ exercising their faith in bringing about deliverance. There is a shift from the ministry of one individual, a minister who is seen more or less as a "super star," to the ministry of the corporate body of Christ. Benson puts it well: "It has been established in my faith that God can use the corporate whole for his healing ministry" (1980:59). So effective was this community approach that it became the normal procedure to minister to the spirit possessed. This approach fits in with Paul's philosophy of ministry as portrayed in Ephesians.

Benson encapsulates the process:

Whenever a person was possessed by evil spirits, no matter if he was in baptismal instruction, a Christian, or a non-Christian, we would gather around the possessed person and in the simplicity of faith would call upon the Lord's help. To the outsider they were impressed that a form of cure took place. This news spread through the "bush telegraph" system that Christians had a method of bringing relief to possessed persons. (1980:57)

While thorough instruction, prayer and singing were important in the process of delivering the possessed persons, baptism was also essential. According to Rev. Benson baptism “sealed” the individual in the faith; thus possessed persons who were healed and baptized were never repossessed. The will must choose Christ to retake the ground from the enemy. Baptism does this when believers choose Christ. Those who view baptism as a magical rite (which God cannot honor) and do not willfully choose Christ are in danger of becoming repossessed. Note Benson’s testimony:

Those who were thoroughly instructed in the baptismal faith and the Word of God, then baptized in the name of the Triune God, never after baptism became repossessed. On the other hand, of those who were baptized without thorough instruction or faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, many became repossessed. It was also noted that some other Christian denominations did baptize a possessed person without proper instruction and many of these persons became repossessed. (1980:57)

Thus for Benson, the effectiveness of the sacrament of baptism in relation to spirit possessed persons is dependent on thorough instruction. His procedure is congruent with the Great Commission passage of Matthew 28 in which there is a component of both baptism and instruction, “teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you.” Instruction diminishes the possibility of seeing baptism as another kind of “magic” useful for healing or

for protection against evil spirits. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ develops as his people hear his Word (Romans 10:14); faith is vital to quench the darts of the devil (Ephesians 6:13). It is not surprising to note that there has been success in the ministry of the Lutheran church in Tanzania.

Power Encounter Model: Zambia

Roman Catholic Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo, aware of the suffering his fellow Zambians had undergone as they were oppressed by evil spirits, ventured to minister to them. He described these spirits as “roaming spirits, generally devils, the spirits of bad angels, or ancestors who have been angered and seek revenge” (Milingo 1984:8-9).

Because these spirits have not been given the desired attention, they attack humans. As Fortes explains:

Men try to coerce and placate their ancestors by means of sacrifices. But the ancestors are unpredictable. It is their power to injure and their sudden attacks on the routine well-being that make men aware of them rather than their beneficial guardianship. (1945:145)

In this setting humans are helpless, needing intervention from elsewhere.

Milingo recognized that while Zambians continued to depend on diviners and other traditional specialists they were slaves to a system that did not bring permanent results. He pointed out that these specialists were

operating by the power of Satan and his demons (1984:10).

To aid the people of his diocese, the Archbishop started a ministry of healing and exorcism. Victims of illness and demonization were brought to the church premises for ministry. Before long crowds of persons were being delivered. He writes that success was so dramatic that evening drums, which were a common instrument used by diviners to cure victims of spirit possession were not heard in the entire diocese (Milingo 1984:5).

Analysis

The spirit world takes a variety of forms including spirit possession, curses and illness. This is a problem in primal societies. Effective ministry to African people can be accomplished only through God and his power and his prescribed means to meet this challenge. The decisive victory over Satan and his demons has been accomplished by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The supernatural power of God manifested through the church plays a central role in this process. These models demonstrate the recovery of New Testament Christianity, which Taylor (1957) lamented was significantly missing. Furthermore, these models show that the same divine power that accompanied the first century church to deal with “principalities and powers” is available to the church in this age.

Before He ascended to the Father, Jesus commanded His disciples to go into the whole world, preaching, teaching and baptizing (Matthew 28:18-20). He assured them that all authority had been given to Him and that as they went in His name He would be with them in the enterprise. With this assurance, the three models suggested in this work can be utilized to disciple African Christians even as they experience the victory over demonic spirits. The first model emphasizes the need to be converted and to confess sins as foundational to becoming members of the Kingdom of God. The atoning work of Christ and His suffering are prominent in setting the African disciple free from his or her demonic possession, assuring the individual of his or her victory. Some kind of ritual activity serving as a landmark in the lives of believers needs to be determined to "seal" the covenant of commitment.

The second model emphasizes the centrality of the Word of God which the Lord commanded, "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." Informed disciples have the capacity to challenge Satan as did Christ during His temptation in Matthew 4:9. Paul's Ephesian teaching must constitute a major part of this process. There is another element, ritual activity, in both the first and second models that is crucial in the disciple-making process in Africa. Baptism as a Christian ritual is an act of

obedience, marking a break with the past and the beginning of a new life. It speaks of putting the old self to death and putting on the new self in Christ. Most significantly, it is a testimony to those around that the disciple from that point on is identifying himself or herself with Christ in His death and resurrection by an act of will. It is a ritual of commitment. Because Africans value ritual activities, baptism, if undergirded by thorough instruction in the Word of God, has immense significance in the disciple-making process. It clearly removes the disciple from the ordinary life and separates him or her unto a new life (*communitas*). From instruction (separation) to post-baptism is a liminal period in which the disciple counts the cost of following Christ. By the time of the actual ceremony signifying the end of the old life and the beginning of the new life in Christ, the disciple is completely aware of the significance of his or her decision to follow Christ. This model has yielded significant results.

Another important element in this model is the ministry of the community of faith, which becomes the agent through which God's healing power flows freely as prayer is offered on behalf of the individual in need of God's help. Such an approach stands in sharp contrast with the "ego trip" which often accompanies some of the advocates of the power encounter

model. In this model the singing of hymns, spiritual songs, and offering of prayers by the entire body of believers releases divine power and strengthens the entire group. With everyone laying hands on the demon possessed, no one individual can claim to have special powers to deliver the oppressed. God receives all the glory while the whole community of believers is encouraged to depend increasingly on the Lord to continue his work in and through the community.

The third and last model also has a place in the ministry of delivering the demon possessed. The first two would encourage believers to bring all their concerns to the group for God's intervention because of the emphasis on the community. This model may be more limited to leaders and people who are gifted, although it has the potential to affect all other issues within the spirit world. In this model, however, the issue of authority and power in the name of Jesus is the key. One problem with Milingo's model is the de-emphasis on teaching and on ritual/sacramental which should have a more prominent place in the disciple-making process. The most critical concern is that the few individuals who are being used in this ministry seem to be overly fascinated by it. While it is true that the Lord Jesus has entrusted His people with power and authority over demonic spirits, the incident in Acts 19 should

serve as a warning to those who are involved in this endeavor. Perhaps the greatest need for those involved in deliverance ministry is humility and seeing that pride lies at the root of all deception.

Components of a Solution to the Problem of Reversions

Part of the framework for this model is taken from Wilbert R. Shenk's article, "Mission Strategies" (1993), in *Toward the 21st Century in Christian Mission*. Shenk identifies five tenets that constitute a theological framework for mission strategies as we approach the twenty-first century: the Holy Spirit as the power, culture as the context, Missio Dei as the source, Jesus Christ as the embodiment and the church as the instrument. A holistic approach to mission must seek to integrate these five essential components. Of these, the Holy Spirit and the cultural context have been, to a large extent de-emphasized in mission. In addition to Shenk's tenets, we would add the place of ritual activities, the teaching on principalities and powers, and the concept of *maduli*. A culturally sensitive church with these components, we believe, will contribute to solving the problem of reversions among the Bagisu.

Culture: Context

As a starting point, cross-cultural witnesses and local ministers must

recognize the reality of the spirit world. The issues associated with this realm must be identified and addressed. Rather than simply condemning the issues and activities of the spirit realm as evil and satanic, there must be analysis and evaluation; we must begin where people are. Following Hiebert's process of contextualization, these issues can then be discussed in the light of the Word of God. Elements which are evil and negative need to be discarded while those elements which are good can be preserved and incorporated into the life of the church. This process requires an atmosphere where there can be open and honest discussion of the issues. Small groups (*maduli*) functioning as a structure of the "koinonia community" provide just such an atmosphere. The *maduli* become the Christian context within the Bagisu culture where this sorting out process, and determining the legitimacy or illegitimacy of elements and practices can occur.

To bring about change effectively in any primal society, its worldview must be taken seriously and addressed with the truth of the Word of God. Hiebert (1987) in his critical contextualization model has suggested four steps to bring about change at this deep level.

The first step involves a desire on the part of the primal people such as the Bagisu Christian to "deal biblically with all areas of life" (1987:186).

This step is crucial. The cross-cultural witness needs to bring the people among whom he serves to this point in preparation for a change in their worldview.

Second, the cross-cultural witness together with local church leaders “must lead the congregation in uncritically gathering and analyzing the traditional customs associated with the question at hand” (1987:106). This stage involves examining the cultural beliefs and practices phenomenologically, namely, for “what they are,” without regard to the truth or falsehood, “rightness” or “wrongness,” of those beliefs. At this stage there needs to be open discussion about the meaning of each traditional belief and practice: “The purpose here is to understand the old ways, not to judge them” (Hiebert 1987:109). This phase is crucial to correct mistakes made by previous cross-cultural witnesses who categorized entire cultures along with their beliefs and practices as heathen and satanic. Such an approach reflected an inadequate doctrine of creation, i.e., all cultures with their beliefs and practices in some sense reflect the image of God as well as the evil that is the result of the fall. This understanding rests on the biblical truth that God is still active in all cultures and therefore there is good, but Satan is at work as well, thus the presence of evil in all cultures. The latter needs to be

confronted by the power of the gospel.

The third stage involves leaders in the church participating in creative Bible study where the issues raised from the cultural perspective of the second stage are now addressed. The leaders are to serve as facilitators. The process should lead primal people to a self-discovery of the relationship between biblical teaching and the particular cultural issue. A later study in this chapter of principalities and powers will serve as an illustration of this stage.

In the final step the congregation or church “evaluates critically their own past customs in the light of their new biblical understandings and makes decisions regarding their use” (1987:107). At this stage the facilitator takes the sidelines and provides only encouragement. “It’s important here that the people themselves make the decision, for they must be sure of the outcome before they will change” (1987:107). The role of the facilitator is to bring to the discussion the experiences of other Christians, past and present, showing how God has dealt with the church and how the church has responded. In this way the local decision has the input of the larger body of Christ.

Maduli -- the Koinonia Community

Existing traditional structures like *maduli* (small group structures which

constitute a clan; several clans form a tribe) in the Bagisu culture can be utilized to minister effectively to the Bagisu. Within these structures people will not only belong and find identity as members of the Christian community, but will also find a place for mutual support during times of crisis. *Maduli* serve as a corrective to the individualistic attitude which has characterized the Anglican church in Bugisu. *Maduli* are a means to create koinonia communities, agents of renewal and unity within the larger context of the professing church. The importance of the *maduli* in the social structure is especially apparent when dealing with ritual activity relating to the human life cycle.

Small groups provide a forum for dealing with the issues at hand. Traditionally, these *maduli* work together on projects and engage in life cycle rituals and festivals as the needs arise. Fortunately, the Bagisu context already has the small group structure, *maduli* in place. These are indigenous units which can serve as small groups. The Bagisu culture is well-suited for the development and utilization of *maduli* for this purpose. Conceptually and socially the Bagisu are better prepared to function in the environment of a small group than many Westerners. While Western culture and society is distinctively individualistic, the Bagisu culture and society is more communal

in its understanding.

The operation of small groups for spiritual growth and development is no new concept in church history; from New Testament times to the modern era believers have utilized small group structures. Often these smaller units have operated within the larger context of the Christian community, for example, Zinzendorf's *ecclesiolae-in-ecclesia* and Wesley's classes. These function as small churches within a big church. The *maduli* can be used in this way in the Bagisu culture, too. It is here that the teaching, the ritual activities, and the experience of the supernatural can be shared. Both cross-cultural witnesses and indigenous pastors need to recognize the value of small groups and utilize culturally sensitive models like the *maduli*.

Ephesians 4:16 shows essentially how interdependent and interconnected the members of the body of Christ are. The relationship of believers to the head and to one another is how the life of God is shared in the body and then spills over into the world. The life of a vibrant community of believers is a powerful witness to the world of the reality and power of God. Using Paul's emphasis of "putting off" and "putting on," cross-cultural witnesses and local Christian ministers need to encourage the taking off of an older understanding of community and putting on a new understanding of

community. One is not changing the structure as there is still an inherent, interrelated community of the *maduli* which form the clan and which is part of the tribe; rather the content that fills that structure is being transformed by the power of the gospel and Christian truth. *Maduli* allow us to affirm what is good in Bagisu culture, an inherent belief in community, and yet to shift the loyalties of that community to Christ the Lord. Whereas in traditional communities the spirits of the ancestors and divinities are the source of power to deal with issues of the spirit world, now the Holy Spirit and Christ, “our older Brother” are the source of power to deal with issues that concern the people of God.

Maduli provide intimacy and also create an atmosphere in which people can become transparent in dealing with issues that affect them. In contrast with “burying such issues underground away from the clergy” and then dealing with them in secret through traditional means, *maduli* can serve as a structure whereby issues brought to the surface can be dealt with in a biblical manner.

The people of God as a covenant people must be unreservedly committed to God. The bonds of affection and the accountability within the *maduli* structure provide a hedge against reversions. Small groups such as

maduli serve to strengthen loyalty to Christ and his kingdom as the bonds of love and commitment among the believers develop. There is a vital interconnection between deepening intimacy and the development of loyalty. Christian discipleship of necessity requires unequivocal loyalty to Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).

It is interesting to note that the use of the word “koinonia” in relationship to the fellowship of believers is often used in the context of a member or members of the Trinity (I John 1:1-7; I Corinthians 1:9-10; II Corinthians 13:14); no member of the Trinity is excluded. Thus can be implied that true Christian community must of necessity involve the presence of the Godhead. The Trinity is the model for all relationships. It is the quality of the relationships within the Godhead that should define the quality of our koinonia.

Ritual Activities

The church needs to tap into the rich Bugisu rituals and myths in order to provide the much-needed bridge to their African worldview. The church should take its cue from God, who was not adverse to using culture to communicate to humans about himself. What began as revelation within the Hebrew culture culminated in the Incarnation. He was realistic in his

assessment of culture and humanity and came to redeem, modify and judge as need be. The church does well to follow this pattern.

One of the ways to deal with the problem of reversion is the use of biblical ritual activities. Like other primal societies, the Bagisu place emphasis on ritual activities because they mark significant events in life. No one doubts the efficacy of ritual activity because they believe there is spiritual power behind the symbolism. The church does well to tap into this rich avenue to provide believers with the educational opportunities ritual activities bring about. For every traditional ritual activity marking significant life-cycle events such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death the church does well to organize an equivalent ritual involving the entire community. Additional opportunities could be provided by examining ritual activities for other events such as sickness, or some similar crisis. These rituals can be Christianized by maintaining the forms but changing the meaning.

With reversions being a problem in Bugisu, ritual activities provide a society with an avenue to inculcate values and rules by which those who intend to become members can be initiated. A combination of biblical teachings and ritual activities can prevent reversions. Eliade notes that initiation is an indispensable process for anyone to become a member of that

society [community] (1965:114). Through initiation rites, the community affirms its identity and commitment to its values. This involves rites of passage.

Rites of passage are a category of rituals that mark the passage of a person through the life cycle, from one stage to another over time, from one role or social position to another, integrating the human and cultural experiences with biological destiny: birth, reproduction, and death. These ceremonies mark the basic distinctions, observed in all groups, between young and old, male and female, living and dead. (Myerhoff, Camino, Turner 1987:380)

Because rites of passage occur at designated times, they provide for the initiates an atmosphere of expectation, anxiety, and vulnerability. Three stages have been identified in the rites of passage: separation, liminality, and incorporation (Turner 1969:166). The first involves the temporal severing of the usual support systems in society; the initiate experiences separation. The usual support systems like parents, friends, and church members are gone. In between separation and incorporation is liminality in which the initiate is neither in the former stage nor in the latter stage. This is the transformational period when initiates learn most. Through instruction the initiates enact the rituals. Those activities become landmarks for the individual as well as for the group.

The Jewish Bar Mitzvah for instance, provides the young man with an

opportunity to experience separation from his mother and family. During that stage of liminality or transition, learning Jewish values involves pain, mockery, and drama. By the time of incorporation, the Jewish roots, identity, and values are inculcated in the young man so that he feels positive about being a Jew (Spiro 1977:383 f). In Africa, Maasai warriors (*morans*) and Bagisu circumcision initiates (*basinde*) go through a process similar to that of young Jewish males. By means of these rites, the individuals are shaped for the rest of their lives.

In the church we need to focus on ritual activity in order to provide special moments for Christians to learn and experience a life-changing lesson. For instance, the sacraments can be the means of reenacting the death and resurrection of Christ. According to van Gennep (1960:11), Christian sacraments are essentially rites of passage since they focus on the death and resurrection of Christ. The purpose of the ritual activity of baptism, for example, is to provide an individual with symbolism for the death of the old self and its activities and arise to newness of life.

Church leaders can intentionally enhance the structure of worship to emphasize the liminal quality of the sacraments. A significant number of people have had life-changing experiences after baptism. A colleague, Barje

Maigadi, from Nigeria shared a story about his mother. His mother was a victim of demon possession. Finally she became a Christian. For her, baptism was the pivotal point in her life. Before she was converted, she was attacked by evil spirits which sent her into a kind of severe sickness that kept her from performing her normal duties. Traditionally, in such a case as this, professional spiritists would be summoned to come to her rescue. The process could take as long as a week. She would be placed in the middle of the singing and chanting professionals for as long as it would take for her to respond to their cure. The moment the evil spirits were placated she would instantly rise to her feet, though weak from a human standpoint. At the end of the episode, the family would be charged a large sum of money. This occurred yearly. But after she became a Christian, her baptism in 1980 marked the end of that life. She has not been attacked again since that moment of conversion and baptism. Her testimony surrounds the rite of baptism as a point when her past life with evil spirits was rejected and her new life in Christ began. This testimony is not unique to Barje's mother. Barje notes that his mother thoroughly understood the Christian teaching before she made the decision to be baptized. Sufficient biblical teaching is central before the rite of baptism is administered. The Christian community

can ritually present baptism as a rite of passage. This rite of passage by its radical nature serves as an initiator into a clearly marked Christian identity and community.

The central aspects of ritual activity are experience and participation. In the example of Ganly (1987), the people took a step to come to the place of confession (the log) after hearing the teaching of the gospel. To move from where they were seated to where Father Ganly was located to do the confession and finally return to join the rest of the group involved a separation, transition (liminality) and incorporation (re-aggregation). The promise they made to God in the presence of Father Ganly and the entire community made it a memorable event for them. Furthermore, they shared their food with those in a different community, which they would not normally do. Sharing food also involved the three stages. They left their homes (separation), walked to the other village to deliver the food (liminality), and as they joined their family and community they were incorporated. Ganly reports that the testimony of changed lives spread so fast that within a short period of time surrounding villages were open to the gospel.

These rites of passage need not be limited to sacraments and life cycle

issues. Other issues include misfortune, loss of property, sickness, need of employment, marital affairs etc. We need to identify these life crisis events and bring together those who are involved at a pre-arranged location. They can join with others experiencing the same difficulty, separated from their normal support systems. This structure forms a rite of passage, designed to bring the individuals through the crisis together. As part of the community, the others within the church will be praying for them at another location, sharing their burdens.

The originating structural event for the congregation is placing the initiates into special seating or a special location within the church service before they are sent off to a pre-arranged location. At this time they are separated from normal social relationships through special restrictions like severing communication until they are re-incorporated. At the retreat center Christians who have had similar crises share from experience and the Word with these initiates. They become resource persons who are able to share the practical and spiritual lessons which apply to the crisis. In this role they act the same way as traditional shamans, who are resource persons in times of crisis.

The initiates are encouraged to share openly with the others. There is

a final symbolic event which binds the group together and points to the end of the crisis and a new beginning. For instance, if the initiates have all lost their close relatives, they may be encouraged to bring the deceased person's favorite item to the retreat center. These items can be placed at the altar in preparation for a ritual activity. As a group, they may be encouraged to symbolically release their pain by laying their hands on the items while prayer is offered. As a healing process, the initiates are encouraged to hand the items to the leader to donate to the underprivileged in another village. At this point, they turn their grief into a ministry. Or they can keep the item as a reminder of the retreat and the release they were able to make.

The entire group of initiates sits together at the next Sunday's service; they are welcomed back into fellowship in their new status by their prayer partners and family members, thus uniting the two groups and bonding the church together in new and stronger ways. There is a ceremonial re-incorporation which may be characterized by feasting, testimonies, prayer, and the Lord's Supper.

The performance of Christian ritual therefore is seen as appropriating the power of Christ to meet the needs of daily living, and involves overcoming the power of evil spirits. The church needs to tap into the power

and grace of God by means of sacraments and sacramental events. His power and grace are available in the practice of one's faith as well as in the practice of ritual.

Following Hiebert's (1987) Critical Contextualization model, the church might explore the following suggestions: The sacramental base of Holy Communion may have to be shifted from the pastor/priest to the family/tribe. The practice of Holy Communion is to be encouraged in the homes and presided over by the grandparents and parents. Where participation of small groups is encouraged within the natural setting of the tribe, communion should be placed in the hands of the lay leadership of the church.

The "priesthood of all believers" needs to be initiated in the African church. Family members are to be invited to share in the rituals of the church whenever possible. It is the parents, along with the pastor, who are to name and dedicate their children. It is the parents, along with the pastor, who are to give a child his or her first communion. It is the church community which is to oversee and direct the circumcision of the eighteen-year-old male. The old men and women of the church community are to instruct the Christian man and woman prior to marriage. There is a shift in emphasis and roles. The

pastor becomes overseer of congregational ritual as opposed to officiator.

The pastor confers his blessing upon the enactment of the sacramental ritual.

Whenever possible all rituals, particularly the rites of passage, should be incorporated into and performed as a part of the Christian *communitas*.

Currently the church is not involved during the three-to-four-day period between the time a person dies and when the church officiates at the burial.

Adherents of primal religion officiate in the course of those three to four days.

Rather than the church showing up at the last moment of the burial ceremony,

it should get involved right from the time the person dies. This being an

important rite of passage, the church can make an impact on the community by active participation.

Baptism and renewal of baptism should include the church as well as the entire clan. The ceremony can occur annually on a "Great Day of

Celebration," wherein one's repentance, forgiveness, faith in Christ and

baptism are celebrated, along with God's forgiveness and empowerment to overcome the evil in one's life as well as the power of evil spirits.

The church has largely abandoned significant involvement in rites of passage, as we discovered in the field research. Bagisu pastors have not made efforts to utilize the ritual activities as a means to make relevant the

gospel to every aspect of life. This responsibility needs to be appropriated by the church rather than being left in the hands of those who practice primal religion. The people of primal religion must have something to embrace before they will give up what has been practiced and what has worked for centuries. One must deal with the cultural fact that ritual and rites of passage are significant in the Bagisu society, so significant as to cause Christianity to appear to be impotent when it does not participate in the appropriate ritual and rites of passage.

The implication for cross-cultural witnesses is the church's challenge to once again study ritual as it is currently practiced among primal societies with the intent of building on these rituals. If this effort is made by the church and if new meaning is supplied to the old rituals, Bagisu Christians can participate in all life's rituals within the context of the church. Precedent for such participation is found in African Independent Churches.

The Supernatural

Taylor (1957) recognized the handicap of the Anglican church in Uganda in the face of reversions to traditional religions and practice. He, like Father Okoye (1992:286), advocates adoption of a New Testament type of Christianity, "And all this means that the Uganda Church, and the missions in

its midst, needs to recover the essence of a supernatural dimension in its behavior, if it is to offer bread, not a stone” (Taylor 1957:142). By “New Testament type of Christianity” he means that believers not only recognize God’s supernatural power in Christ over sin, death, and the universe but also by the agency of the Holy Spirit they appropriate and experience this supernatural power. By means of this supernatural empowerment in their lives and in the church, they are enabled to have victory over satanic forces in the world. Like Christ their Lord, they pray for the sick and exorcise demons, and as in the primitive church the gifts of the Holy Spirit are operative in the life of the church.

This type of Christianity, practiced by the Pentecostal, Charismatic, and African Independent Churches, has had tremendous success in Africa. McGee notes that the largest segment of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians is in the Two Thirds World (1993:42). Hiebert (1993:262) points out the reason: New Testament Christianity addresses the problems which confront primal societies daily, including sickness, death, witchcraft, sorcery, spirit possession, evil eye, curses, ancestral contacts, magic, and idol worship.

In order to deal with the needs of the spirit realm, Taylor recommends

the recovery of the New Testament type of Christianity with its supernatural dimension (1957:142). Okoye (1992:266) echoes Taylor's observation; so does the former General Secretary of CMS, Max Warren. Warren had expressed concern over the "intellectual" emphasis of the CMS and its failure to recognize or understand the spirit world, thus "forcing these beliefs and practices to go underground," only to surface in times of crisis. He suggested, "Christians must take the empowering and guidance of the Holy Spirit much more seriously in their individual lives and their corporate activities, than is commonly the case" (1976:126).

The seriousness of the neglect of the Holy Spirit in missions has been expressed by Roland Allen. He laments that other activities have usurped the place of the Holy Spirit to such an extent that the supernatural dimension of the gospel is no longer part of mission (1927:14). This study echoes Taylor (1957), Okoye (1992), Warren (1976), and Allen (1927), that the role and ministry of the Holy Spirit needs to be restored to the church. The African Independent Churches have understood the necessity of the ministry of the Holy Spirit to address issues in the spirit realm. Warren has aptly observed,

African Independent Churches are an indigenous protest against the indigestible Western accessories to the Faith purveyed by the Western churches through their missionaries. These churches are growing very rapidly in Africa and may well have a determining influence on the future shape of Christianity. (1971:127)

The recovery of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers and the Church is an important means to deal with issues found in the spirit realm.

Ganly (1987), Benson (1980), and Milingo (1984), cited above, illustrate the recovery of this supernatural dimension. In my previously cited example, Ganly, in breaking the spell which had threatened the existence of the villagers, used public confession, turning away from sin and all satanic operations, and prayer to God. In cases of demon possession, Benson (1980) utilized the sacrament of baptism, through instruction, and corporate prayer to bring about deliverance. Milingo (1984) brought about his parishioners' deliverance from satanic oppression by a direct confrontation or power encounter. All three authors experienced a shift from the two-tiered worldview of the West which did not recognize the "Excluded Middle," to a holistic worldview, which includes the realm of the spirits. The various methods employed by these men demonstrate the different ways in which God works. The methods may differ, but the central element is the supernatural. However, this is not supernaturalism without a foundation; in every case there is submission to the absolute authority of God. The Holy Spirit's dynamic in the corporate body liberates people to be formed into the image of Christ. Power is not to be sought as an end in itself; the end result

of the Spirit's activity among his people is to develop in them Christlikeness and to increase devotion to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Yet power is part of the outworking of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the community of faith. As we position ourselves under the lordship of Christ we allow God to act in our specific situation.

Believers in the Acts of the Apostles waited for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4, 2:1-4). God's people must be open to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. There needs to be reliance upon his direction and empowering. Worship is a key element in this process. It is during times of worship that the church is most prepared to receive life from the Head. Worship is a focus on God that corrects our perspective. When our eyes are upon him, he can manifest his presence in the gathering of his people. His divine presence brings the gifts of healing, miracles, deliverance, faith, etc. It is in this context of worship that believers are directed by the Spirit in ministering to one another, laying on hands, anointing with oil, casting out demons, praying for the sick, and delivering the oppressed. The Spirit reveals Christ as not only risen, but also reigning and resident among his people. This emphasis is what one finds in the ministries of Ganly, Benson, and Milingo.

The supernatural must be affirmed, and there must be a manifestation of the power of light over darkness. Here we are specifically speaking of the power of Christ to dispel deception, to enable one to live a fearless life in obedience to God, to cast out demons, and to heal the sick. The benefit of the small group in this regard is the bringing together of the gifts of all the believers, resulting in a unified, dynamic, and vital power encounter.

The promise is held out to the people of God that wherever two or three are gathered together, the presence of Jesus becomes manifest (Matthew 18:19-20). The supernatural presence of God in the midst of the people is an identifying characteristic of that people (Exodus 33:12-16). The Old and New Testaments are filled with the supernatural. God's people were not simply aware of the supernatural; they lived in the expectation of it. Such should be the case in Africa as well. If it is true that the supernatural plays a significant role in Scripture, then it must be considered significant to the restoration of the New Testament type of Christianity. The more holistic the religion is, the more power there is in its "gospel." To leave the supernatural out of the Christian gospel is to adopt an anemic, truncated version of Christianity, one that proves to be powerless in normative life and powerless to resist the onslaught of other religious systems. Clearly the supernatural is

evident in African culture; it is visibly intertwined in the whole of life for the African person. There is no “excluded middle” in the real life of the average Bagisu non-Christian or Christian. Rather the issue becomes addressing of the spirit realm in a biblical manner.

It should be clearly understood that the New Testament type of Christianity does not equate supernaturalism with irrationalism.

Documentation of excesses and abuses in the name of the Holy Spirit and supernaturalism is abundant, from the Montanists of the second century to the Pentecostal “snake handlers” found in present-day Appalachia. For this reason guidelines are recommended to provide a “boundary” in order to prevent abuse.

Guidelines for Dealing with the Supernatural

Keeping the New Testament type of Christianity from becoming irrational requires a carefully prepared system of checks and balances. There have been instances where there is much confusion in the church when the Spirit is supposedly actively at work. God is not the author of confusion but of order and peace (I Corinthians 14:33). Hiebert’s (1985c) article, “Discerning the Work of God,” provides excellent insights for preparation of such a system. He presents six areas: 1) Give God the glory, 2) The Lordship

of Christ, 3) The authority of Scriptures, 4) Balance, 5) Maturity, and 6) Unity. All six of these categories must, however, pass the test, “Can they be applied cross-culturally?” If the standards prepared for each category cannot be used cross-culturally, the validity of such standards must be questioned. A detailed discussion of Hiebert’s standards now follows.

Give God the Glory

Hiebert (1985c:151-152) states, “. . . the central purpose of Christianity is to seek the glory of God. . . . There is here a subtle but very real danger, particularly for leaders in the church, to take for oneself the glory and authority that belongs to God alone.” He later illustrates how the body of Christ as a whole acts as a check which ensures that God, rather than individual leaders, receives the glory. The natural human tendency toward glorification of individual leaders is somewhat restrained among the Bagisu by their use of small groups (*maduli*) as a basic social unit in which all are to be participators rather than spectators. While the leader’s role as moderator and facilitator is significant, the style of leadership in this model involves servant leadership. There is only one “super star” in the body, and that is Christ. God has vowed never to share his glory with anyone. Glory belongs to God alone. Because this model is based on a communal effort, whatever

God does to bring deliverance or meet needs, his people corporately give him the glory that is due to him. The corporate body is clear on the source of power; God alone is sufficient to meet any needs that might be represented.

The Lordship of Christ

Hiebert shows how two central issues are dealt with under this heading: 1) the deity of Christ, and 2) magic as idolatry. While the first is fairly straightforward, the latter involves the use of incantation and rituals as a subtle means of manipulating God. Hiebert (1985c:154) notes, “at its core, magic is an attitude of coercion.” He later expounds, “The Scripture is particularly harsh in its condemnation of magic for it is a form of idolatry.” The eventual source of this thinking pertaining to these magical practices as an attempt to manipulate God is such that it makes God less than God by directly attacking His sovereignty. God cannot be manipulated in view of his sovereignty. True discipleship requires obedience to Christ (I John 2:3-5). God’s people must ever be aware of the temptation to use God’s power as a means to draw attention to themselves. The examples in Acts 8 and 13 of Elymus and Bar-Jesus respectively serve as a warning to the Church, and it should be noted that such behavior weakens the very cause of the gospel.

A more subtle form of “Christian magic” and one that constitutes an

even greater threat to the church is reflected in the attitude a person takes toward Christ. In worship the attitude is to be one of subordination and submission to the will of God and the person of Christ, whereas in magic it is an attempt to control Christ to achieve one's own purpose. In the former, one's own will and desires are subordinated to those of God, for God's glory is the end. When one's will and desires become central, religion becomes another means to gain one's own end (Hiebert 1985c:153). Therefore, emphasis must be given to the place and person of Christ. He is Lord; we are to do his will, not ours. Understanding of his lordship, his overarching authority over the whole of life, puts the manifestation of his supernatural power in the larger context. His power is the means to an end, the accomplishment of his cosmic purposes in history.

A holistic and balanced understanding of *maduli* recognizes the importance of discipleship. Matthew 28:18-20 provides in summary a discipleship model for the *maduli*: Jesus is Lord, all authority is his "in heaven and on earth" (v.18), and on that basis disciples are to be made of all the nations (v.19). Fundamental to this discipleship is incorporation into the covenant community, the people of God. Baptism is the sign of this incorporation (I Corinthians 12:13) and is the identification of the believer

with Christ in death and resurrection. The disciple is to “learn and do;” truth is to be applied to the whole of life (Matthew 28:19). In the discipleship process the presence of Jesus Christ is promised (Matthew 28:20) in the context of submission to Christ’s ultimate authority (Matthew 28:18). How in practice does the discipleship process take place? Discipleship of the individual takes place in the corporate context, small groups serving as a structure for the process.

Authority of the Scriptures

Fascination with the supernatural is a temptation the New Testament type of Christianity must guard against. The manifestations of the Spirit are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. Gifts and manifestations are not to usurp the place of the holy nor to contradict God’s surest form of revelation, the Scriptures. All activities must be in agreement with the Scriptures. No matter how great or powerful one’s experience, for it to be of God it must be in conformity with Scripture. This safeguard is critical for the New Testament type of Christianity.

Balance

A common problem among God’s people is the tendency to go to extremes. Since the New Testament type of Christianity focuses on the

supernatural in an attempt to restore a critical aspect which has been lacking, there might be the tendency to focus only on demonstrations of power. The gifts and manifestations of the Spirit are not independent of the fruits of the Spirit as presented in Galatians 5:22-25, and the fruits must equally be emphasized. One of the most striking portions of Scripture in this regard is Matthew 7:21-23. Many will say that they were casting out demons, prophesying and performing miracles in his name, but he will say to them “depart from me you workers of iniquity.” Jesus made it clear, “By their fruit you shall know them” (Matthew 7:20). This passage should serve as a warning for the people of God to focus not only on the power of God but also to seek to do the will of God by conforming to the image of his Son. Character building is the believer’s first priority. While Satan can duplicate power, the fruit of the Spirit manifested in Christlike character is the work of God.

A further key is to stress balance in teaching. Any one truth out of balance leads to heresy and deception. All doctrines need to be taught (Acts 20:27; II Timothy 3:16,17). Denominational doctrines and liturgical practices must be honored and taught, but also the teaching on principalities and powers and the importance of the supernatural must be taught, and the church

must strive for balance in all things.

Maturity

This aspect is closely related to the issue of balance. A mature believer recognizes the need for balance. He or she cannot be preoccupied with the power of God at the expense of developing a relationship with God or neglect the role of being conformed to his image. With or without miracles believers are to serve God. Supernatural manifestation is not our area of specialty; it is God's prerogative to intervene or not to intervene. In his timing, he demonstrates his power, love and grace to bring wholeness to people. Maturity understands that according to Scriptures, failures are part of God's economy, too (cf. Romans 8:28). While we encourage people in need to be open to God's intervention, it is not ours to guarantee that they will receive what they need, nor are we wise enough to know exactly what is best in any situation. Whatever we receive from God is a result of his grace, love and mercy, and the mature person leaves unanswered issues in the care of a faithful God.

Unity

In the context of renewal, divisions and isolation, which contribute to reversions must be countered by a strong support system provided by unity in

Christ. Hiebert (1985c:157) observes that these divisions, especially in the Third World countries, have been due in part “to the fact that those who have not experienced renewal may reject those who have.” Additionally, there is the tendency of those who feel gifted to act independently, often beginning their own churches and ministries. This separation seems to be a common feature of African Independent Churches, Pentecostal, and Charismatic churches. This trend has served to weaken renewal movements, and many believers have become victims of reversion. We must distinguish between the leading of God to begin a ministry and an individual acting from selfishness or egocentrism. Individuals and small groups who break away from their original fellowship often become victims of the enemy.

I believe Jesus was speaking purposely when he said that when two or three gather together in his name his presence is manifested. To release God’s power, believers must work to maintain unity in the body. The Spirit can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). True spirituality seeks to strengthen the weaker brethren. Jesus’ prayer for believers is that they be one (John 17:22), and the Apostle Paul echoes this concern in Ephesians 4:3, “strive for unity in the bond of love.” The unity of believers is a powerful testimony and provides a bond that evil forces cannot break.

Principalities and Powers

The Bagisu believe in spirits and forces which infest the universe; they believe ghosts, spirits, and ancestors actively participate in human affairs. These forces are believed to be especially influential during important events such as birth, marriage, death, business ventures, and harvest. There is much good to be found in such a worldview because of God's involvement and grace and because of the image of God found in humans. However, one must recognize not only the good elements in culture, those associated with the image of God, but also that the "tempter" preceded the Fall. The balance is delicate but necessary. Sometimes there is a tendency to magnify the work of Satan in a culture to the point that every activity in that culture is seen as satanic. Others go to the other extreme, minimizing the work of Satan and the Fall to the extent that everything in a culture is to be preserved. Cross-cultural witnesses together with local believers need to determine in the light of God's Word what is legitimate and redeemable and what must be challenged as satanic. When it is clear that the issues identified involve the demonic, the teaching on principalities and powers presented in this study could be a starting point in the discussion. These evil elements in every culture which work against God and humans are what the Apostle Paul refers

to as principalities and powers. The New Testament world of magical practices, witchcraft, divination and related activities parallels that of the Bagisu. Therefore treatment of these issues among the Bagisu has New Testament precedent; principalities and powers must be addressed as part of a holistic solution to counteract reversions among Christians.

Obijole's observations affirm what is proposed by this study about the Bagisu and how the solution to the problem of reversion is to be found in Christ. "The traditional African thought system is dominated by spirits, ghosts, witches, wizards, unseen enemies (real or imaginary), who are believed to be against one's welfare" (1986:121). Obijole further notes,

The message of Paul becomes very relevant to us: that Christ has defeated all elemental spirits like witches, wizards and the world of evil that may not wish us good is good news indeed. Now this is not mere theory, it is being practiced through the manifold growth of various and divergent African Independent and Pentecostal churches. It is now an open secret that Christianity is alive in Africa and continues to grow through African Pentecostal churches such as the Cherubim and Seraphim, the Christ Apostolic church, the Celestial Church etc. in Nigeria, the Church of Salvation in Sierra Leone, the Kimbanguist Church etc. The miracles of raising the dead, liberating women from more than year old pregnancies, removal of the spirit of wizardry from people and solutions to a host of other demonic African problems, have shown that Christ's victory over principalities and powers is a reality in Africa. . . . For whether or not the Western world is agnostic about the message, the world of principalities and powers is real in Africa, and Jesus Christ is seen as the solution to them. (1986:122)

Obijole's affirmation is echoed by Father Okoye (1992). The teaching on principalities and powers not only provides initial deliverance from the forces of darkness for the believer, but also by the use of the armor of God the believer can resist further attacks. Christians then do not have to revert to traditional religion to deal with issues related to the spirit realm but can deal with them in the context of their Christian faith.

Paul's teaching in Ephesians provides both an important and an excellent outline in relation to dealing with principalities and powers. First, Christ is supreme, and his power is above all forces. All power and authority is given to him, and in this power he has commissioned believers to carry out his task of bringing wholeness to those in need. The Body of Christ is to carry on his mission and ministry.

Second, believers need to recognize their position in relation to Christ and in relation to the forces of darkness. Because of their relationship to Christ, believers have authority to deal with evil spirits, witchcraft, and sorcery.

Third, God's presence is rich and full when God's people worship him in spirit and in truth. Paul exhorts the Ephesian believers to be filled with the Spirit and also to sing hymns and spiritual songs to each other (Ephesians

5:16-18); God's promise to inhabit the praises of his people becomes reality. When this is the "koinonia" of God and his people, the stage is set for God to work in supernatural ways.

Fourth, believers need to appropriate the armor which God has provided for them. In Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul describes the armor of God by means of which believers are protected from satanic attacks. The knowledge and the appropriation of this provision are necessary to liberate God's people from the fear of the evil spirits which surround them.

A volume detailing first century era magical and divinational practices has been edited by Hans Dieter Betz (1986). Such practices included the use of various chants, symbols, formulas and the names of spirits and divinities. The use of amulets is an indication of the seriousness with which first century persons viewed the supernatural realm.

The evidence from these first century secular sources attesting to the belief in and practice of magic and divination strongly affirms the New Testament accounts of the reality of evil spirits, sorcery, diviners and magic. Thus Paul's "power encounters" recorded in the pages of Acts and what he writes concerning principalities and powers in the Epistles are, in fact, first century experiences.

How is one to account for the universal violent reaction to the proclamation of the gospel in the religiously pluralistic first century? The gospels indicate that with the advent of Christ, the rule of God in the kingdom of God is inaugurated, proclaimed and established. For Paul the in-breaking of this new order is that of the “kingdom of light” into the “domain of darkness” (Colossians 1:13). For Paul, resistance and opposition to the gospel cannot be understood only in human terms. Spiritual forces of the “kingdom of darkness” operate contrary to the “purposes of God” (Ephesians 2:1-3).

Paul is clearly aware of the nature of this conflict and his own place in it. In Acts 26:18 part of Paul’s commission from Jesus Himself was the task of seeing people turn from the dominion of Satan to the Kingdom of God. (See also Colossians 1:13-14). The word *diabolos* is used in Acts 13:19, where Paul identifies the nature of the opposition as evil and spiritual. Paul recognizes Satan’s reality (cf. II Corinthians 4:4, 11:2 f.; Ephesians 2:2) (Bruce 1990:298). This same word *diabolos* is used in Ephesians 6:11 (Bruce 1990:163). Thus Paul’s charge in Ephesians 6 is entirely consistent with the events of Acts, namely that the Christian is to expect resistance by hostile evil forces and the opposition of these forces to the gospel. Christians

must “put on the whole armor of God” (Ephesians 6:11,13) as a necessary preparation for the conflict.

Paul’s testimony in Ephesians depicting Christ as the One exalted above all power and principalities provides the basis for the believer to face these evil forces. Moreover, being positioned in Christ as one with him and seated with him in the heavenly places provides the believer with security. Finally, Paul admonishes the believer to “put on the whole armor of God” to “withstand the wiles of the devil.” The ministry of the Holy Spirit that brings about the presence of God among believers enables believers in primal societies like the Bagisu not only to live victoriously, but also to minister to those affected by forces of the evil one. (For a detailed study of Principalities and Powers see Appendix 4).

A Pastoral Example: Cursed by an Aunt and Delivered by Christ

Marion was an active member of St. Andrews Cathedral in Mbale, Uganda. Since her family was Anglican, she had been baptized as an infant and confirmed as a teenager. My wife and I were family friends. During one of our pastoral visits, Marion, who was usually pleasant, appeared sad. Since she trusted us as close friends, she shared her problem with us. She had had a daughter by a man from another tribe against her parents' approval. When

she defied them and moved in with the man, the entire family was disgraced, and her aunt cursed her. As a result of the curse she was inflicted with a *kigalanga* (a hard object in the intestinal area with the capacity to move about like a baby).

People are aware of such sicknesses but do not find help in the church or even in modern medical science. Such cases are settled by traditional healers by calling on powers in the spirit realm. A curse pronounced by an aunt could only be broken if her conditions were met. Many persons have been healed by meeting certain conditions. The aunt's condition was Marion's abandonment of the other tribe. However, Marion was in love and would not fulfill this condition. As a Christian and university graduate, Marion argued her case on the basis of Christians being members of the body of Christ, in which there are no barriers, social status, or even gender. She believed such walls were broken down by the death of Christ (Galatians 3:28). After failing to find help from medical doctors, she tried to break the curse by visiting spiritualists. She obtained various medications, charms, and amulets from the spiritualists but was not cured, so her search continued.

When she shared with us we gladly told her that God was capable of delivering her from this illness, but only on his conditions. She needed to

believe the gospel which she knew only by mental assent and in abstract terms. Next she needed to trust Christ personally and establish a relationship with him. Moreover, she needed to repent and confess her sins and trust God for his will to be done in her life. We did not make unwarranted promises but pointed out that God was capable of helping her according to his will. We shared relevant portions of Scripture and gave her the opportunity to respond.

With this understanding, Marion began weeping, repenting, confessing, and seeking help from God. We laid hands upon her as the Scripture teaches (Mark 16:18) and prayed for her salvation and healing. We did not see dramatic healing, but she testified that she had much peace and joy in her heart. She had made peace with God and was now justified by faith in Christ (Romans 5:1).

By this time it was almost midnight and we asked her if she had any medicines and charms from the specialists. She invited us to her bedroom where a whole gamut of paraphernalia had been accumulated from different sources. We shared Scripture with her, showing her how God would protect her because he was greater than any forces seeking to harm her (1 John 4:4). By Jesus' death on the cross he had become a curse on her behalf (Galatians 3:13). Therefore trusting in Jesus would break her aunt's curse; she did not

need protective charms since God had provided complete armor for her (Ephesians 6:12 f.).

We asked her, as an act of repentance and total commitment to God, to destroy the charms and amulets. We helped her carry some of them to an open field nearby. I helped arrange them so they would burn well and encouraged her to strike a match and set them on fire. By this time she was very excited and joined in the popular victory chorus in Lugisu, *Yesu awula umusigu akaba atyena* (Jesus is Lord over everything). She set the stuff on fire while we cheered her on. It was quite a spectacle. By this time all the neighbors had gathered, including her family members. One family member, Farida, a sister-in-law with a Muslim background, accepted Christ at this time. Farida said she was deeply touched by the event, for she had witnessed it all. In the family there were two other believers who formed a nucleus for a community of faith. I assigned them to three other families from the church, and together they formed a new cell group. Our church has other cell groups where discipleship and nurture take place. Within these cell groups the felt needs of the members are met.

When Marion learned of the forthcoming baptism for the class of twenty-six believers, she enrolled for instruction, along with Farida. She

insisted that she be baptized by immersion, even though she had been baptized as a child by sprinkling at St. Andrews Cathedral. Farida was baptized for the first time - what a celebration it was that day! The Lord's Supper was celebrated after their baptism, a common practice in which the rest of the believers in the congregation celebrate with them. By this act, these newly baptized believers were initiated into the membership of the congregation.

We did not discover that the *kigalanga* had disappeared until two months after we prayed for Marion. The healing seemed to have been a gradual one. This event occurred in 1983 at my first pastorate in Mbale. Marion has been freed from the *kigalanga* since that time and is now a deaconess in the church, serving the Lord and testifying to the sufficiency of God's grace to deliver and to preserve his people from such attacks.

Suggested Principles for the Prevention of Reversions

1. Recognize the Reality of the Spirit World and Its Components

The church in Africa must acknowledge that there is good and evil in every culture. Although the fall of humanity brought about the presence of evil as well as good in every culture (Genesis 3), God created humans in his own image, and it is this image that accounts for the good in every culture

that is in conformity with scriptural teaching. For instance, in Africa human life is regarded as highly precious. This is why all children in Africa are regarded as God's blessings to humanity. Other examples of good include emphasis on hospitality, generosity, respect for elders, and strong family ties. These virtues and many others are upheld by Scripture. The church in Africa needs to recover the biblical basis of these virtues because they reflect God's image in all humans as proof of God's prevenient and common grace to humanity. God in his providence is actively involved in every culture because he is interested in his own creation (Acts 17:24-29).

Even while recognizing the good manifested in every culture, the church must not underestimate the effects of the fall and the activities of Satan (1 Peter 5:8). Evil is also a reality in human hearts and in social structures as well as in the spirit world. As I have shown in this study, the church in Africa seems to neglect the reality of the spirit world due to Western influence. For the church to be dynamically whole, it must consider all aspects of this reality. Therefore I urge that the church in Africa always take a balanced holistic approach in dealing with both physical and spiritual issues in the lives of its members. For example, Marion needed to be healed from the power of the curse, but she also needed a supporting community as

well. She had been to the hospital and other places, but she needed a spiritual remedy to her problem. My own experience and the testimonies of church workers in Africa, Benson (1980), Ganly (1987), and Milingo (1984) show the need to make a conscious shift from a two-tiered Western perception of reality to one which includes the spirit realm. This shift will make it possible not only for the African church to deal with problems that arise from the spirit world but also to minimize reversions.

2. Identify the Nature of the Crisis and Determine an Appropriate Course of Action

In the context of reversions, people react to crises in different ways. If the crisis is be related to the realm of the spirit world, the African church needs to identify it. When modern medicine seems to have little effect in solving the problem, the indication may be that the problem is related to the spirit world. Such was the case with Marion and the woman Ganly (1987:347) ministered to in Zambia. The crisis may be related to economic and social issues. In this case the church must look for concrete means to deal with the problem. The church needs discernment in order to meet the needs of its members. When the church identifies and meets the needs of its members, people will make the church their home, hence minimizing the

recurrence of reversions. In the examples cited above, the nature of the problem was first identified, then followed by the necessary measures. For Ganly (1987) the spell that had afflicted the woman and threatened the entire village with extinction was not dismissed as superstition, but rather was taken seriously and was averted by corporate commitment to Christ, confession of sins, prayer, and ritual activity. In Marion's case, we had to recognize that the curse was real, as evidenced by the *kigalanga*, to determine the remedy, which required commitment to Christ, prayer, the ritual of burning the amulets and charms, and discipleship with teaching within a small group. Benson (1980) recognized that demonic oppression among his members could only be overcome by thorough instruction in the Word of God, baptism, corporate prayer, and songs of victory in Christ. Milingo, on the other hand, discerning that his parishioners were afflicted by evil spirits when they came to him, cast them out in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The task at hand for the church in Africa is to determine the nature of the problem and then to determine the appropriate measures for solving the problem. When issues are identified and addressed directly by the church, believers will have the freedom to share such concerns. Then the problem of reversions should subside significantly.

3. Emphasize the Importance of Total Commitment to Christ

Deliverance from the power of evil must not be the end of the spiritual life. The church must emphasize and teach the importance of total commitment to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ must be recognized not only as Savior but also as Lord. Allegiance to him is of paramount importance. All Christians must choose whom to serve (Joshua 24:14, 15; cf. I Kings 18:2). They must be willing to turn from any activity the scripture forbids. Total commitment to the lordship of Christ is the antidote to the problem of reversions. Commitment provides the basis for a meaningful relationship with God, who has the ultimate power to protect the believer from any harm. Believers in Zambia were challenged by Father Ganly (1987:349) to turn away from sin and practices the Bible forbade and make a total commitment to Christ in order to experience healing and freedom in Christ. By setting the charms and amulets on fire, Marion was by this symbol demonstrating total commitment to Christ. Total allegiance to Christ provides a remedy to the problem of reversions in any given situation.

4. Rely on God's Power

God promises to be present in the midst of his people (Matthew 18:19).

Thus we know he is actively involved in the lives of his people. The church in Africa should be open to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. God's power is always present when his church yields to the Holy Spirit (as in the Acts of the Apostles). The present Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are examples of God's desire to move in his church. The temptation of many African leaders is to insist on the traditional teaching of their churches, such teaching as the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased to be operative after the days of the Apostles and Church Fathers. Insisting on this dispensational tradition can blind the individual to the biblical teaching that God's power is at work through his Holy Spirit. Regarding issues related to the spirit realm, the church needs the appropriate spiritual means to deal with them. J. V. Taylor's (1957) observation that the church in Uganda was impotent when faced by issues of the spirit world applies to any church that ignores the power of God. His advice to the church of Uganda was to recover New Testament Christianity. He meant that the church needed to accept the ministry of the Holy Spirit as believers did in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. When God's people are filled by and walking in the Holy Spirit, not only will they experience victory over sin but also over forces of evil. Since God has the power to be present in the church at all times and the

their old ways. Marion and hosts of believers in Uganda, Zambia, and Tanzania in the examples above provide encouragement to the church in Africa regarding healing and freedom from forces of evil. Scripture testifies, [He] "is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with joy" (Jude 24). With God's power at work within the church in dealing with the problems of believers, reversions will subside.

5. Focus on the Word of God

The Scripture is the basis for faith and conduct (II Timothy 3:16). Conduct is also solidly based on a denominational tradition, its cultural roots and backgrounds, especially as believers interpret and apply Scripture to themselves. The church in Africa should therefore read, interpret and apply the Word in such a way that it meets the felt needs of believers. The need to contextualize the Word of God cannot be overemphasized. Believers need to know their identity culturally and religiously. Marion and others in the examples cited above, having committed themselves fully to Christ, needed to know that their life was "now hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3 NIV). The teaching of the Word must include all subjects such as Paul's principalities and powers in relation to what Christ is able to do for believers.

principalities and powers in relation to what Christ is able to do for believers. Believers cited in Benson's (1980), and Ganly's ministries (1987) were taught the Word of God before and after baptism. Marion attended to the teaching of the Word of God during the process of discipleship that took place in her small group. While preaching has its place, teaching ensures thorough instruction in terms of the obligations and responsibilities of believers to God, to themselves, and to others in the community. Teaching allows for interaction within the group as opposed to preaching, which is essentially a one-way communication with little or no interaction. The saying that the African church is like a river a mile wide and one inch deep shows the need for in-depth teaching of the Word of God. Sound biblical teaching provides believers with the depth they need in Christ to withstand the pressure to revert to traditional means in dealing with crises in life. Marion's growth and eventual maturity, enabling her to serve as a deaconess, is an encouraging sign in relation to the teaching of the Word of God. Benson (1980) and Ganly (1987) attest to the need to teach the Word of God in the church to minimize reversions. Once believers are rooted and established in the Word of God, they will stand against reversions (cf. Colossians 1:23).

6. Give Prominence to Ritual Activity

Rituals are pointers to something beyond themselves, to something supporting them, to something else which gives them meaning. Through ritual practices the holy and the mysterious are transported through the ordinary. Rituals are the means by which truth that has a profound effect on the individual is experienced. In Africa, rituals are given great importance because they serve as vehicles for interacting with the spirit world. Scripture is replete with rituals which convey divine graces, e.g. the ordinances and James' advice to anoint the sick with oil for healing.

The church in Africa should use rituals in its functions especially in worship and special events. For example, anointing the sick with oil, giving a new meaning to baptism as a rite of passage; emphasizing life cycle events like birth, naming ceremonies, puberty rites, marriages, and death. These and others are all occasions in which the church can create meaningful rituals that help people through these transitions in their life. The church must determine which customs are consistent with scriptural teaching and which ones are not. Appropriate functional substitutes must be employed if traditional customs contradict biblical teaching. Ceremonies and celebrations should be given prominence in the church. Rituals provide believers with unforgettable

experiences. Marion will never forget the experience of her deliverance because of its close connection with the ritual of setting amulets and charms on fire. Father Ganly led believers to confess their sins to him while seated on the log and later encouraged them to share their produce as the means to seal the covenant they had made with God. Though a spell is broken as a consequence of God's intervention, confession and sharing are cherished activities because they affected lives for good. In the light of the impact rituals have on those who participate in them, the church should maximize the use of rituals. When life-changing experiences occur within the church, there will be little or no need for traditional rites, and hence reversions will diminish.

7. Develop Small Groups (*Maduli*) within the Church

Life in Africa is communal. Without the community an individual loses his or her identity. The church in Africa needs to take this existing cultural strength and use it to develop its members into maturity as a group of saints. The church in Africa must do away with the concept of individualism introduced by Western cultural influence. The concept of the community is attested by the reality of the trinity. The early church captured the dynamic of community life and practiced it (Acts 2:42-46).

In community life believers can meet for celebration and the sharing of their daily experiences. But these communities must be small enough (*maduli*) to encourage transparency; trust is essential between the members. Marion was able to share with us because of trust and because we were not simply part of a crowd. Notice that in the already cited examples, except for Bishop Milingo, small groups of believers who knew and trusted each other were prominent. Marion's healing and subsequent growth to maturity was accomplished in the context of a small group. In small groups believers become keepers of one another (Galatians 6:1-4). The Christian life is a corporate pilgrimage. In this pilgrimage, those who fall are lifted up by the strong. With this concern one for the other, reversions will be minimized in the African church.

A combination of some or all of the suggested principles will enable the church in Africa to address the crises related to the spirit world and hopefully reduce reversions significantly. With some flexibility among church leaders and Christian cross-cultural witnesses, these principles may be useful to bring about both qualitative and quantitative growth. The end result should be a vital church which will reach not only its own continent with the gospel but others as well.

Summary

The problem of reversions to former non-Christian ways among Bagisu Anglican Christians is phenomenal. In view of the factors that contribute to this trend, a combination of elements from several models of discipling and administering deliverance from possession of evil spirits should be sought and used. The resource models include Marion's experience, Ganly's (1987) Conversion and Confession Model, which emphasizes confession along with the conversion experience; Benson's (1980) Didactic and Sacramental Model, emphasizing a new meaning and significance of baptism through instruction, prayer and singing; and Milingo's (1984) Power Encounter Model, in which the evil spirits are confronted with the power of God.

The components of the solutions for the problem of reversions should be the culture, which provides the context; the use of the *Maduli*, the already existing cultural groups and group orientation, to serve as the *Koinonia* community; and understanding the appropriate use of the ritual life of the Bagisu, such as the rites of passage. In addition, Paul's teaching on principalities and powers should lead to recognizing, understanding, and addressing the supernatural world of the Bagisu.

To remain operative within authentic Christianity, certain guidelines

should be followed. When the deliverance from evil spirit possession has been effected, the glory belongs and should be returned to God. In winning the Bagisu to Christ, the Lordship of Christ in their lives must be the goal, not just the blessings of healing and deliverance. Furthermore the authority of Scripture must be upheld, and the Word of God should be taken as God's surest revelation. Balance in teaching should be maintained and spiritual maturity pursued.

While the problem of reversions in the African church is phenomenal, the principles suggested above will contribute to the solution of this problem. As a consequence, reversions should subside and the church will be in position to accomplish her divine task of discipleship and evangelism.

CHAPTER 8

Summary of Conclusions, Missiological Implications, and Recommendations

Summary of Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to discover why Bagisu Christians revert to traditional beliefs and practices when they are confronted with crises related to the spirit realm. The issue of reversion to traditional beliefs and practices among Christians in primal societies is a complex one. Various possible factors that may have contributed to the problem of reversions among the Bagisu Christians have been identified in this study. Conscious efforts are necessary to bridge the gap between the cross-cultural witness and the recipient in order for effective communication and ministry to take place. As Hiebert has aptly observed in relation to converts to Christianity, “If their high religion provides no answers, they generally turn to animistic practices, to spiritism, witchcraft, and magic” (1993:225).

The spirit realm and related activities are a reality not just for the Bagisu; the Scriptures are replete with similar examples of the spiritual world and its activities. The field research data revealed that over 50% of Bagisu Christians reverted to their folk religion. This is the extent to which

Christianity has not met the needs in the realm of the spirit world. The church has the task of creatively understanding the Bagisu worldview and relating the gospel to them in meaningful ways.

This study has proposed components of a solution which might assist Bagisu Christians and other primal societies to deal biblically with issues related to the spirit world. We believe that a combination of these components within the context of the *maduli* will assist the Bagisu Christians to deal biblically with the issues that affect them within their cultural context. The role of ritual activity, the teaching of the Word of God, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit within these structures provide a setting for the Bagisu Christians to have a more vital church. It is hoped that reversions among the Bagisu will diminish as a result of employing the proposals made.

Missiological Implications

Cross-cultural witnesses need to make a conscious effort to shift from their ethnocentric and religious approach to a holistic approach, in order to minister effectively to people like the Bagisu. The Bagisu religious system is largely characterized by concrete experience. The use of abstract theological language to express the experience of faith has its place, but when applied to primal people it may not be an effective tool to communicate the gospel.

Theological colleges operating in the setting of such people as the Bagisu may have to include within their curriculum concrete experiences in addition to the abstract theological content in order for the graduates to be able to meet the needs that exist.

This study has attempted to demonstrate that the spirit world of the Bagisu needs to be taken seriously if the gospel is to meet the needs in that realm. Anthropological models of worldviews and cognitive domains, cited in chapter one, have helped us recognize that even though humans are essentially the same, their environment and experiences shape the way they perceive their world. A missionary, whether from the West or from Africa, must begin work by recognizing these differences in worldview in order to minister effectively. Coming from outside the cultural setting, the cross-cultural witness must be willing to learn from the insiders. Unless one learns what questions are being asked by persons within a given culture, one's presentation of the gospel will in all likelihood miss the mark. Consequently, in the event of crisis the Christian will revert to the traditional methods to deal with issues raised by that Christian's own worldview. Reyburn's thoughts summarize section for us well:

Since missionaries preferred to deny their [African] reality [of the spirit world] rather than work with the African in

appreciation of these phenomena, the African has in many areas of Africa held his Christian faith in one hand and his belief in the mysterious world of his pre-Christian days in the other. (1978:81)

Reyburn's challenge serves well, "If the churches of the West [and local churches] are to prepare and work with African Christianity in the face of Islamic advance [and African Traditional Religious beliefs and practices], there must be an entire rethinking of the deeper reality of the non rational phenomena [spirit world of the African worldview]" (1978:82).

The content of a gospel where individual salvation is the overriding factor in missions is summarized by Weborg (1986), "How are sinful human beings saved or justified before a holy God?" The answer, "on the basis of Christ's death alone, made possible by grace alone and received by distraught sinners by faith alone" (1986:17).

Just because one has responded to the salvation message and is born again, a new creature

does not mean that he starts or continues his life in a vacuum, or that his mind is a blank table. It has been formed by his own culture and history, and since God has accepted him as he is, his Christian mind will continue to be influenced by what was in it before. (Walls 1982:101)

The centrality of the new birth is critical for missions. Missionaries and local evangelists, past and present, are to be commended for preaching this

message of new life. Our contention, however, is that the individual does not stand in isolation but is deeply intertwined in the social-cultural setting of which he/she is a part.

Passion for souls led some cross-cultural witnesses and local evangelists beyond simply a disregard for the recipient culture; they went further and condemned it in its entirety as evil. Such wholesale condemnation included the spirit world and issues related to it. Missionaries classed these areas as “simple superstition” (cf. Stoeffler 1965).

This issue is taken up by Busia (1959), who challenges individualism, isolationism and the denigration of culture:

Consider the life of the individual Christian within the group of which he is a member. He must share in its family life as defined by his society. He must share the reciprocal obligations of that group. He shares its economical activities. He shares its knowledge and experience; he shares in its sentiments, its drives, its fears; he shares in its song and language and dance. He drinks out of its cup, the cup of the group's culture, different from other cups. The cups may be filled from the same river, but they are different cups. Must Christianity change the cup, or can it be the river that fills it? (Busia 1959:26)

Separating an individual from his or her social and cultural relationships is disorienting. Rather, efforts should be made for converts to “feel at home” in their cultural setting as the African Independent Churches emphasize.

The mandate to have people experience salvation within their cultural

settings is rooted in revelation and in the Incarnation:

The desire to do this is tied up with the very nature of the Gospel; it is patterned in the Incarnation itself. When God became man, Christ took flesh in a particular family, members of a particular nation, with the tradition of customs associated with that nation. All that was not evil He sanctified. Wherever He is taken by men in any time and place He takes that nationality, that society, that "culture," and sanctifies all that is capable of sanctification by his presence. (Walls 1982:97)

Not only is this concept exemplified in the Incarnation, but also in God's revelation. Israel, God's covenant people, trace their ancestry to one, Abram (Genesis 12:1). God chooses to reveal Himself to and through Abram, a "Chaldean from Ur." There is both good and evil in every culture, but God's revelation is the means by which God's people discern points of departure. Cultures are not inherently evil. The image of God in humans reflects God's morals, and God is at work in all cultures. The history of redemption provides examples of revelation through culture, or the appropriation of culture for revelation. A good example of adopting cultural practices in maintaining a relationship with God from the Old Testament is that of the sacrificial system. Israel's neighbors had a sacrificial system, but God used what was in those cultures to communicate his will to Israel. When God instituted a sacrificial system in Israel, he did not avoid using the rituals existing among Israel's neighbors, but gave them new meaning. It is the

theology which determines the meaning of any ritual activity. God's involvement and revelation of meaning made the difference between Caananite sacrifices and the ritual of Israel (cf. Vaux 1961:440 ff.).

Furthermore, the idea of a temple was neither originated with nor unique to Israel; other nations had temples, too, yet God uses the temple in Jerusalem as a point of focus for his presence among his people (I Kings 8). The church needs to make use of rituals, myths and symbols in cultures, filling them with new meaning by supplying the correct theological content. The Christmas holiday is a good illustration of this principle. Pagan symbols like the Christmas tree and candles were utilized but given new theological meaning (cf. Eichrodt 1961:98 ff.). This is what Stott (1981) calls contextualization. Its pattern is drawn from God's revelation, especially in the Incarnation. Contextualization involves redemption and critique, not just affirmation or rejection of culture as a whole. Issues need to be addressed one by one in the light of biblical revelation. In salvation history God redeems while critiquing so that eventually the good is accepted, the neutral modified and the evil rejected.

For instance, as we have seen, the Bagisu and other societies believe in good ancestral spirits which protect and bless humanity. The idea of

ancestral spirits who are the guardians of the families as a concept is neutral. This idea must not be judged and rejected as evil, but needs to be used with the appropriate theology to convey Christian meaning.

For items that are rejected, anthropologists suggest functional substitutes. We have seen that a functional substitute is the introduction of an item in the culture that serves the same function as the replaced item, but with a new meaning. Functional substitutes fill the place the item formerly occupied in society and in the lives of the people in question. In this case, good spirits which are real in the Bagisu culture would be replaced by the Holy Spirit, who works on the believer's behalf to bring about God's good intentions for his people. Ancestral spirits are close to the Bagisu in order to help them. Christ the Great Ancestor, Immanuel, God with us, is the ultimate mediator and guardian of God's people. The role of mediation which ancestors play among these societies is a powerful tool that should be used to introduce Christ as the mediator between believers and God the Father (I Timothy 2:5).

In other words, simply because there is evil associated with spirits and ancestors when they discipline their descendants, there is no warrant to label all concepts and practices associated with spirits and ancestors as evil. The

church must recognize that the good in these cultures is evidence of God's grace, for He is at work in His world. The missionary, the pastor and the local evangelist need to discern the work that God is doing in a culture and seek to build on it to bring the gospel of Christ to the people of that culture effectively. To ignore the good already in a culture is to have a distorted view of God's creation and of the God who is actively involved among all peoples and cultures.

We therefore suggest that the place to begin in the process of reducing reversions is culture. The worldview of the people needs to be taken seriously. In the interviews, several instances in which ancestors assisted Bagisu came to light. For instance, many reported that ancestors warned them via dreams of danger that had been set for them by their enemies. As a result, they took the necessary precautions. Diviners also helped get rid of the evil spirits which harmed people by manipulating the good spirits. Many testified that diviners had relieved their family members from serious sickness which would have resulted in death.

As for the good and neutral spirits, the church needs to use functional substitutes, i.e., the Holy Spirit, angels and the presence of Christ to replace their role in the Bagisu community. While people get help from the good

spirits, they are also concerned about the harm caused by evil spirits, and consequently, they live in fear. The gospel needs to address those evil spirits to liberate the Bagisu from this fear which plagues them. The supernatural dimension of the gospel and the teaching of principalities and powers deal directly with these evil entities.

Recommendations for Further Research

More study should be done regarding the spirit realm and its relationship with the gospel. There are powers of evil spiritual beings hostile to God and humans in all cultures. They hinder the work of God, primarily affecting individuals; thus the exhortation to put on the whole armor of God. But there are also good and neutral spiritual beings who minister to humans in positive ways. Further research into the interaction between good and neutral spiritual powers and Christian believers is needed, especially among primal societies such as the Bagisu.

The second area for further research concerns the extent of demonic activity in social institutions and persons. The phenomenon of demonic influence in all cultures and among all peoples is evident, as reflected by the extent of evil in the world, e.g., ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, the racial tensions in the Gaza strip, the former laws of apartheid in South Africa, and the

dictatorship of Idi Amin, former President of Uganda. In the light of God's power to limit satanic activity, more research into Satan's role in these dehumanizing activities should be done.

In the light of this discussion, those involved in ministry in primal societies such as the Bagisu can rest assured of the victory that comes in the name of the risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. His authority and power manifested in the church by His indwelling Spirit can be relied upon in facing the challenges and the needs related to the spirit realm. His Word, which is powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, has a critical role in the disciple-making process. His Holy Spirit, who is available to all believers, empowers the disciples to live for God. His atoning sacrifice continues to free people from sin and the power of demons. His mysterious grace, revealed through sacraments and ritual, provides landmarks in the lives of the disciples. The community of believers, *maduli*, offers prayers, support and fellowship to all who belong to the Kingdom. Most of all, Christ's presence permeates the entire discipleship process, even as these disciples become more and more like him through the working of the sanctifying Holy Spirit. Consequently, the Bagisu church will be vital, exalting Christ, as reversions subside.

APPENDIX 1

Kirby's Questionnaire

Name-----

Parish-----

Please indicate in the appropriate category how you responded to the issues/problems below:

T = Bugisu traditional solution (*Kinansi*)

O = Christian solution (*ebyekanisa*)

B = A Combination of traditional and Christian methods. (*Okutabula byombi*)

N/A= Not Applicable

1. If a bad death occurs in your family T O B N/A
2. If land is polluted T O B N/A
3. If lightning strikes the house T O B N/A
4. If a house is polluted by incest T O B N/A
5. If a house is polluted by beating of elder T O B N/A
6. If a wife or husband commits adultery T O B N/A
7. If one swears an oath T O B N/A
8. If one is tried by ancestors T O B N/A
9. When you need protection against witchcraft T O B N/A
10. When accused of witchcraft T O B N/A
11. If you suspect a witch in the house T O B N/A
12. When you have to keep kinds of taboos (*ebyokwejusa*) T O B N/A
13. When there are malformed births T O B N/A
14. When performing rituals for widow or widower T O B N/A
15. When you need rain T O B N/A
16. If something is stolen T O B N/A
17. In case of a dispute T O B N/A
18. Two people sharing one spirit and one does T O B N/A
19. When in possession of harmful medicine T O B N/A
20. When there is *mayembe* (Mystical powers) T O B N/A
21. When dealing with the newborn T O B N/A
22. When there is madness T O B N/A

23. When trying medicine (*kuzema*) T O B N/A
24. When you need sexual strength T O B N/A
25. When afflicted with venereal disease T O B N/A
26. How do you guard against jealousy T O B N/A
27. Protection against theft T O B N/A
28. Protection against animal or dog bites etc. T O B N/A
29. Protection against strong spirits of murdered relatives T O B N/A
30. When confronted with a problem which requires inquiry T O B N/A
31. When relationships are affected T O B N/A
32. When there is a miscarriage T O B N/A
33. If a child cried excessively in the night T O B N/A
34. If you had a bad dream T O B N/A
35. If you want to win a woman or a man's love T O B N/A
36. How to avoid bad luck T O B N/A
37. If going on a journey T O B N/A
38. Before going to a funeral or big event T O B N/A
39. Before getting a date for a celebration T O B N/A
40. If a sudden death occurs T O B N/A
41. To determine the cause of sickness T O B N/A
42. If a wife can't conceive T O B N/A
43. Preparation for birth T O B N/A
44. Before a court case T O B N/A
45. Before naming a child T O B N/A
46. If a wife or husband runs away T O B N/A
47. If one can't hold on to money T O B N/A
48. If making a business agreement (deal) T O B N/A
49. Why a farm is not a success T O B N/A
50. To get a better job T O B N/A
51. Before an examination or interview T O B N/A
52. Before building a house T O B N/A
53. Before entering a house T O B N/A

APPENDIX 2

Results of the Field Research

1. If a bad death occurs in your family T= 17 O= 28 B= 30
N/A= 5
2. If land is polluted T= 24 O= 20 B= 28 N/A= 17
3. If lightning strikes the house T= 10 O= 28 B= 18 N/A= 13
4. If a house is polluted by incest T= 23 O= 23 B= 26 N/A= 7
5. If a house is polluted by beating of elder T= 18 O= 21 B= 28
N/A= 13
6. If a wife or husband commits adultery T= 8 O= 32 B= 20 N/A= 19
7. If one swears an oath T= 13 O= 13 B= 26 N/A= 27
8. If one is tried by ancestors T= 25 O= 12 B= 27 N/A= 14
9. When you need protection against witchcraft T= 22 O= 24
B= 22 N/A= 18
10. When accused of witchcraft T= 18 O= 22 B= 25 N/A= 14
11. If you suspect a witch in the house T= 15 O= 24 B= 23
N/A= 17
12. When you have to keep kinds of taboos T= 20 O= 10 B= 14
N/A= 36
13. When there are malformed births T= 8 O= 28 B= 26 N/A= 17
14. When performing rituals for widow or widower T= 12 O= 17
B= 21 N/A= 29
15. When you need rain T= 9 O= 34 B= 13 N/A= 23
16. If something is stolen T= 7 O= 37 B= 30 N/A= 5
17. In case of a dispute T= 12 O= 32 B= 31 N/A= 4
18. Two people sharing one spirit T= 26 O= 20 B= 18 N/A= 42
19. When in possession of harmful medicine T= 17 O= 25 B= 17
N/A= 20
20. When there is *mayembe* (Mystical powers) T= 23 O= 20 B= 20
N/A= 16
21. When dealing with the newborn concerns T= 7 O= 25 B= 42
N/A= 5
22. When there is madness T= 22 O= 14 B= 37 N/A= 6
23. When trying medicine (*kuzema*) T= 18 O= 19 B= 11 N/A= 31
24. When you need sexual strength T= 14 O= 33 B= 16 N/A= 16
25. When afflicted with venereal disease T= 8 O= 28 B= 35
N/A= 7

26. How do you guard against jealousy T= 3 O= 43 B= 15
N/A= 18
27. Protection against theft T= 6 O= 26 B= 27 N/A= 20
28. Protection against animal or dog bites T= 5 O= 18 B= 34
N/A= 22
29. Protection against strong spirits of murdered relatives T= 26 O= 20
B= 18 N/A= 15
30. When confronted with a problem which requires inquiry T= 29
O= 12 B= 26 N/A= 14
31. When relationships are affected T= 9 O= 33 B= 29 N/A= 8
32. When there is a miscarriage T= 21 O= 11 B= 22 N/A= 28
33. If a child cried excessively in the night T= 16 O= 20 B= 23 N/A= 11
34. If you had a bad dream T= 23 O= 13 B= 26 N/A= 17
35. If you want to win a woman or a man's love T= 9 O= 35 B= 20
N/A= 15
36. How to avoid bad luck T= 18 O= 26 B= 18 N/A= 18
37. If going on a journey T= 14 O= 22 B= 28 N/A= 7
38. Before going to a funeral or big event T= 4 O= 35 B= 14
N/A= 26
39. Before getting a date for a celebration T= 11 O= 30 B= 20
N/A= 18
40. If a sudden death occurs T= 6 O= 27 B= 32 N/A= 14
41. To determine the cause of sickness T= 31 O= 15 B= 26
N/A= 7
42. If a wife can't conceive T= 22 O= 10 B= 21 N/A= 22
43. Preparation for birth T= 7 O= 30 B= 32 N/A= 10
44. Before a court case T= 11 O= 18 B= 10 N/A= 40
45. Before naming a child T= 14 O= 30 B= 31 N/A= 4
46. If a wife or husband runs away T= 13 O= 35 B= 19 N/A= 12
47. If one can't hold on to money T= 23 O= 14 B= 26 N/A= 8
48. If making a business agreement T= 6 O= 37 B= 17 N/A= 19
49. Why a farm is not a success T= 8 O= 28 B= 22 N/A= 24
50. To get a better job T= 13 O= 25 B= 23 N/A= 9
51. Before an examination or interview T= 8 O= 40 B= 18 N/A= 15
52. Before building a house T= 8 O= 19 B= 19 N/A= 33
53. Before entering a house T= 9 O= 37 B= 26 N/A= 7

APPENDIX 3
CMS Archives Codes

Precis Books

Precis Books are summaries of correspondence received. They have been arranged in this order:

G3 = Group 3 - Africa Missions

O = Original Paper

A7 = Uganda

Documentation takes this form: CMS Archives G3 A7 O 1901

The Church Missionary Archives used these codes.

CMS Annual Letters/Proceedings/Annual Reports have undergone changes but refer to documents from missionaries on the mission field.

L = Letter books are outgoing letters to the missionaries from the CMS headquarters.

Letter Books

The letter books contain copies of outgoing correspondence from secretaries at head quarters as Committee's representatives to missionaries, also occasionally copies of Correspondence and papers from others concerned with the mission affairs in Britain and Overseas. The volumes have name indexes.

L1	Letter- Book	27 January, 1898
L2	Letter- Book	19 December, 1904
L3	Letter- Book	8 November, 1910
L4	Letter- Book	22 August, 1919
L5	Letter- Book	11 August, 1925
L6	Letter- Book	10 March, 1932

Original Papers 0 (incoming 15 boxes) 1898-1934

The original papers comprise all incoming papers sent by the mission secretary (or occasionally directly from the missionaries) to the Group Committee. They consist mainly of letters and reports, but include minutes and papers of local CMS and diocesan committees. They are numbered (in red ink) for each year (from January 1) and are marked "U" or "Uganda." The date of receipt is also noted and often the initials of secretaries and other

headquarters staff dealing with the material. Some items, notably finance correspondence, were removed as soon as they had been entered on the Precis (see Precis books 1P); others were removed in the normal course of administrative work. Usually in these cases a note of the number of the item, plus the initials of the staff member and the department, remains in the packet.

Precis Books

The incoming papers (0) were numbered for each year (from January 1) in the chronological order in which they arrived at headquarters. A printed precis (from January 1902 mimeoed) was prepared for each meeting of the Group Committee. This comprised number, date, writer, date received, summary of the contents, proposals for committee action to be taken and /or secretary's remarks. A file copy of this precis (used as agenda papers by the committee) was pasted in the precis book on the left-hand side. On the right hand, the committee clerk entered relevant committee actions of Committee of Correspondence, General Committee etc., and notes of secretarial action (e.g. letters written; See Letter Books).

N.B. The Group Committee minute books do not necessarily include the recommendations or minutes entered in the precis books.

P1 Precis Books : 25 January 1898-1907 1 volume

P2 Precis Books : 23 July 1907 -1915 1 volume

P3 Precis Books : 28 April 1915 - 1927 1 volume

P4 Precis Books : 22 March 1927 - 1934 1 volume

P.C.= Parent Committee

The earliest committee in charge of overseas work called committee of correspondence, later known as the P.C. - directed the whole of foreign work of CMS until 1880. Due to the increase in the work, 3 sub-committees were appointed - East Asia, West Asia and Africa. The Africa missions were allocated to the Group 3 Committee (which changed its name to Africa Committee in 1923). For overseas series of archives the missions in Africa have been given the letter A and numbered in the chronological order in which the missions were begun e.g. for West Africa, it is A1, A2 for Yoruba and for Uganda, it is A7.

Secretaries with Primary Responsibilities for East Africa Mission

1876 - 1881 Edward Hutchinson

1882 - 1892 Robert Lang

1892 - 1912 Frederick Bayliss

1912 - 1925 George Thomas Manley

1926 - 1934 Handley Douglas Hooper

This information was obtained from the Church Missionary Society Papers of the Uganda Mission 1898-1934; catalogued by Rosemary A. Keen 1980 and deposited in the Library of the University of Birmingham in 1981 in Hesley Room - Special Collections.

Uganda Mission (code) A7

Under Africa (Group 3) Committee G3

L1-6 - Letter Books (Outgoing) (6 volumes) 1898-1934

O- Original papers (Incoming) 1898-1934

P1-4 - Precis Books (Outgoing) (4 volumes) 1898-1934.

APPENDIX 4

Paul's Understanding of Principalities and Powers

Both the location in the Ephesians 6 context and the content of the passage itself serve to highlight the conflictual nature of this key Scripture, Ephesians 6:12. Plainly, Ephesians 6:10-18 must be considered as a unit. The believer is to expect and to prepare for warfare. The nature of this conflict is intense; one must "put on the whole armor of God," entering the struggle in God's "mighty power" so that one might "stand the wiles of the devil."

Paul's bracketing of Ephesians 6:12 between the dual references to the "whole armor of God" is not without purpose. The reader is left with little doubt as to the true nature of the opposition. It is not with "flesh and blood." The metaphorical description of the pieces of the armor in Ephesians 6:14-18 makes clear that the combat to be entered into is not to be understood as occurring in the natural realm. The nature of the opposition is spiritual and evil, "of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11), and involves rulers, powers and forces in league with "the evil one" (Ephesians 6:16), forces which inhabit and operate in the spiritual realm. The principalities and powers of Ephesians 6:12 refer to evil spiritual beings, hostile to God and humans.

Because of the explicit reference to the devil in the immediate context, Carr (1981) opted to "exorcise" this verse from the book of Ephesians, yet the language is self-explanatory. The several terms, "rulers, powers, forces," point to the various forms with which the devil seeks to attack the kingdom of God and his allies. As Kraft (1992:19) has put it, there is no need to make a distinction between them; the central point is that they are under the command of Satan.

In the discussion of principalities and powers, O'Brien observes that these are personal beings: "This is obvious from the names that they bear (they are called gods, prince of this world, the god of the world, the accuser, the nature of their operations and activities" (O'Brien 1984:137). These evil forces are regarded as subordinate to Satan, manifestations of his power and organized into a single empire (note especially Mark 3:22-30; cf Luke 10:17 f.; Revelation 12:9; 16:13 ff.)" (O'Brien 1984:132).

Paul understood his own commission to the Gentiles as "turning them from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God" (Acts 26:16-18). The power of Christ in the life of the Christian meant a change of

allegiance, loyalty to a new kingdom. Paul testifies, “He delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13). In Ephesians 2:2, Paul, referring to the believer’s pre-conversion state, writes that believers “once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2 NIV). The believer’s former lifestyle was responsible for conduct characterized by the sins of the “flesh,” (Galatians 5:19,20); “among whom also we once conducted ourselves in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Ephesians 2:3 a). Thus, says Paul, “we were by nature children of wrath, just as the others” (Ephesians 2:3b). Thus as the Christian once walked in league with the “powers” which stand in opposition to God, he or she now finds himself or herself in conflict with these very forces as he or she lives and walks in loyalty to the Lord Jesus and the kingdom of God.

Clearly then, Paul intends his readers to understand that these principalities are evil and hostile to God. One must take up the “armor of God” because the conflict is not primarily in the natural realm, it is spiritual and supernatural.

Not only does Paul identify principalities and powers as evil personal spiritual beings who oppose God and humans, he also describes the relationship of both Christ and the believer to them. Paul’s concern is that believers may be able to resist any satanic forces which threaten their lives.

Christ’s Victory over Principalities and Powers

The exaltation of Christ is central to the book of Ephesians. He is depicted not only as Redeemer, but as the One exalted above all powers and principalities. God in his mighty power not only raised Christ from the dead but also “seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come” (Ephesians 1:20 NIV). The writer emphasizes the total supremacy of Christ not only over all human life but also over all other power in the universe. As Mitton observes, “In the ancient world there was a wide-spread belief in spiritual powers other than God himself, and the early Christians share in this belief” (1976:71). Mitton concludes, however, that the writer of Ephesians is concerned not so much to define the nature of these destructive powers as to give the assurance that Christ is one who is their master and who can deliver those who trust in him from their power (1976:72).

The decisive victory of Christ over principalities and powers is

captured in the assertion, “God has put all things under his feet.” In (Colossians 2:15 RSV) Paul writes in the same vein, “Having disarmed principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” This passage has a long history of interpretation. Lohse accurately observes in the *Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*,

Colossians, too, does not say that the powers are done away with, but that they are disarmed, incorporated as the vanquished in the triumphal procession of Christ (Col. 2:15). As in a triumphal procession in which the subjugated follow behind the victor, all still are visible and must proclaim the greatness of the victory that has been achieved through the very might of their appearance. So the rulers [principalities] and powers are still in existence, but for believers they no longer bear any weapons and thereby they glorify the victory of Christ. (Lohse 1971:113)

Such an observation is valid when considering Ephesians 6:12, for while the defeat of the forces and powers is decisive, they still exert influence on the world and contend with God’s agents in the accomplishing of his will. Thus Paul instructs the Ephesian believers to put on the whole armor of God. Arnold summarizes Christ’s victory over these forces of darkness:

The place of Christ in relation to the “powers” is vividly depicted. By virtue of his resurrection and exaltation, our Lord and “Christ” has triumphed over the powers and now exercises his reign as ruler, or “head” preparing for the time when he will completely and finally subjugate all hostile “powers.” Christ can exercise such authority because of his filial relationship to God, with whom he shares all power, or fullness. (1992:129)

Believer’s Position in Relation to Christ and to Principalities

Paul’s salutation which opens the Ephesian epistle is followed by thanksgiving for the spiritual blessings of election to salvation given by God the Father, mediated through Christ and sealed to believers by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:1-4). Believers are redeemed (vv. 7 and 8) and adopted to be sons and daughters; they have an eternal inheritance (vv.11-14). Believers have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places “in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3), in whom believers have placed their faith (vv. 13, 14).

Paul prays earnestly that believers may understand the spiritual position and privilege that accompany being in Christ. Such position and privilege has an eternal foundation in Christ, especially the power of God exhibited in Christ's resurrection and coronation (Ephesians 1:15-23) (Hendriksen 1967:94). "His power toward us who believe" is the same power that raised Christ from the dead and placed him in the highest position above all else (Ephesians 1:20-21). This same power is available to believers (Ephesians 1:19) and it is at work "according to the working of his mighty power which he worked in Christ" (Ephesians 1:19-20).

The climax of chapter one is in verse 22 where Christ is depicted as head of all things including "principalities and powers" (Ephesians 1:21). Dunnam has summarized this chapter beautifully:

The Spirit of this Ascended One had been poured out on His followers and the church was born. The Ascended One had been given lordship over all "principality and power and might and dominion." His name was to be exalted above "every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come" (v. 21). Everything has been put under His feet!
(1982:164)

In chapter two the Apostle Paul begins by describing the believer's former state of death in sin and transgressions (v. 3) and then describes the believer's present state, likening it with Christ's resurrection and exaltation (vv. 4-6). Not only were believers dead in trespasses and sins, they "walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of this world" who blinds the eyes of unbelievers (2 Corinthians 4:4).

By the grace of God in Christ, believers have been made alive (Ephesians 2:5) and have been rescued from the dominion of darkness where they once walked. Paul wrote, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14). Believers have not only been made alive and delivered from the power of Satan, but they have also been made new in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). Further, by the mercy and grace of God, they have been "raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6)

On the basis of the believer's relationship with Christ as one with Him, believers share in the new nature of the exalted Christ and enjoy the

privileges of being exalted with him in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:4, 5, 10 2:6, 3:11, 2:6). Paul testifies of the believer's relationship to God in Christ, "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). Believers share in Christ's victory and because of their union with Christ have no reason to be intimidated by the powers of darkness. The Apostle John writes encouraging believers, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4). Further, Paul states, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds" (II Corinthians 10:4).

Christ empowered his disciples to cast out demons in his name (Luke 9:1-2 and Matthew 10:8) giving them power and authority over all demons. As head of all things, all things having been put under his feet (Ephesians 1:22), and as the one who has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18), all power and principality is under his jurisdiction. Not only does he authorize the casting out of demons but provides as well the whole armor of God so that his followers may resist any onslaught of the forces of darkness (Ephesians 6:11-18).

The Believer and the Community of Faith

In Ephesians, believers are not only one with Christ, but also one with one another. Believers together constitute the "dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22 NIV); whether they be Jews or Gentiles, they have been joined into one body. Christ is the head (Ephesians 2:11-22) of this his body, such that the church with God in its midst will prevail over the forces of darkness. Paul continues to pray for believers to be "strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, ...rooted and grounded in love ... to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 4:6-19 NIV). He exhorts believers to maintain unity (Ephesians 4:1-16) even as he bestows upon them the gifts of the Spirit for service. In contrast with the vices of the old life, they ought to manifest virtues of godliness and walk in the Spirit (Ephesians 4:25-5:22), growing to maturity, putting off the old man and putting on the new (Ephesians 4:17-22). Christian testimony is an important concern for Paul. The relationship between slaves and masters, husbands and wives, children and parents should be characterized by love, respect and mutual submission (Ephesians 5:22-6:9).

A life of purity is critical to the believer's standing and relationship to Christ, to others in the church and to the principalities and powers. The necessity of walking worthy of the calling of God is a theme interwoven

throughout the epistle. These exhortations to virtuous living set the tone for a final exhortation: to engage in the conflict with evil spiritual forces. To fight victoriously, not only does the believer need a life of purity but one must put on the various pieces of the armor which God provides.

The Whole Armor of God

The metaphor implies that there is available to the believer effective security from the attacks of principalities, powers, and all forces of darkness identified by Paul in Ephesians. For believers in primal societies such as Bagisu, the armor of God in its entirety must be “put on” to withstand harm from evil spirits that operate in a variety of ways. Whatever form satanic attacks might take, whether witchcraft and sorcery or vengeance from the spirits and ghosts of ancestors, or evil spirits, believers in Christ are assured of victory as they appropriate the armor of God.

Paul identifies seven elements which constitute the armor of God. The phrase “whole armor” is one Greek word, *panoplian*, which in classical Greek usage indicated the total equipment necessary for a soldier to be fully armed and thus adequately prepared for battle (Vincent 1890:405).

Armed Roman soldiers were a familiar sight in Paul’s day. He draws such a parallel to impress upon the Ephesian believers the need to be fully armed for that spiritual conflict which began at the moment they were translated from the domain of darkness into the reign of God in Christ. Though each component of the armor is treated separately, the reader needs to understand that every one of the pieces is absolutely necessary in the armed conflict with the satanic forces which are at work against the kingdom of God and his allies.

Paul begins Ephesians 6 with a phrase that brings his epistle to a climax. Having revealed the place that Christ occupies as the exalted One over every spiritual force in the universe and having revealed the believer’s place in Christ, Paul exhorts, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might” (Ephesians. 6:10). He points his readers to the source of their power. Notice the Greek proposition *en*, used twice to denote the source of empowerment. Further, two nouns, “strength” and “might,” are linked together. Foulkes points out that Paul intends to emphasize “the incredible strength and power of the Lord of which believers are beneficiaries” (Foulkes 1956:170-171).

The purpose of the armor is clearly identified by Paul: to enable one to stand against the various strategies and tactics which Satan, via his agents, uses to attack believers. The verb “stand” highlights the charge to believers

to hold their position firmly regardless of Satan's assaults (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:4; 1 John. 4:4). Regarding this verb, Clark notes, "The verb indicates that the battle has been won but not the war" (1985:206). The spiritual conflict continues, and the believer is responsible to prepare and engage in the ongoing struggle until Christ consummates his kingdom. Fortunately, their strength is to be found in their God who is sovereign, and their means to wage war is the armor he has provided.

Breastplate of righteousness

Clark notes that this piece of the armor was made of tough leather or metal, covering and protecting the soldier's breast as well as his back. The use of "righteousness" has two interpretations. Some argue that it refers to the Christian moral conduct, while others view this righteousness to mean Christ's perfect righteousness which is imputed to believers. Obviously both uprightness in conduct and Christ's perfect righteousness are essential. The latter interpretation is reinforced by 1 Corinthians 1:30, 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Romans 4:3 which according to Clark denote that victory in this battle is not dependent on the believer's accomplishments, but rather depends on the unchangeable character of Christ. Such a view is consistent with the doctrine of grace.

Gird loins with truth

According to Foulkes, "truth" in Scripture is used to mean sound doctrine (John 8:32, 17:17, James 1:18) and sincerity (John 1:14, 4:23, Psalms 51:6). The latter, Foulkes argues, is the most appropriate meaning in this context. Sincerity fosters singleness of heart, freeing one of pretence. In the context of battle, it is inconceivable that one could fight without such a singleness of intent. While this does place sound doctrine in a secondary role, there is a place for it especially on the level of High Religion. In primal societies like the Bagisu, right doctrine which does not translate into daily experience or address life crises may not be the place to begin missions. The place to begin must involve the sovereignty of God in Christ over all forces of darkness as Paul has demonstrated in the epistle to the Ephesians. Foulkes puts it well,

This is not the truth of the gospel but the undergirding of truth in the sense of integrity, ...as the girdle gives ease and freedom of movement, so it is the truth which gives this freedom with ourselves, with our neighbors and with God. Lack of perfect sincerity hampers us at every turn. (Foulkes 1956:174)

Therefore, when Paul admonishes the Ephesian believers to gird their loins with truth, he means that integrity has primary importance in battle. Since the use of “girdle” implies spiritual readiness for demanding tasks, the necessity of preparation for a task as vigorous as warfare is evident. Falsehood and pretence undermine the believer’s ability to wage spiritual warfare successfully. Mitton’s comments, drawn from Hebrews 12:1, aptly apply to our present case, one must get “rid of anything which might be a hindrance in the struggle against evil” (1976:225).

Shield of faith

The phrase used to highlight the need to appropriate the shield of faith is either translated “above all” as in the King James Version or “in addition to” as in the Revised Standard Version. Considering the fact that all the pieces of the armor are necessary, “in addition to” is a more fitting rendering. It is utter confidence in God, counting on his faithfulness to honor his promises, that protects believers from the enemy’s “fiery darts.” Such unwavering conviction in the character and nature of God not only as trustworthy but also as sovereign is the basis for successful Christian living; this is especially so in primal societies such as the Bugisu where satanic forces seem to attack humans directly via spiritism, witchcraft, etc. Moule’s comments are appropriate, “The true safeguard in the evil day lies ever, not in introspection, but in that look wholly outward, Godward, which is the essence of faith (cf. Psalms 25:15” (1886:156).

The Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God

The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. The Spirit both gives and inspires it, and the Spirit’s aid is needed for its interpretation (Vincent 1890:410-411). When Paul commands believers to receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, it is due to their critical importance.

The Spirit uses the Word to defend believers. One does well to learn from Christ’s use of the Word during times of temptation (Matthew 14:1-10); the believer is “to fortify himself with the knowledge and understanding of ‘the Word’ that he may with similar conviction and power defend himself by it in the onslaughts of the enemy” (Foulkes 1956:177).

The place of the Word and the ministry of the Holy Spirit cannot be overemphasized in the face of modern day secularism which questions the Word and the supernatural. Cross-cultural witnesses in primal societies such as Bugisu especially must be careful to note Paul’s emphasis on these particular aspects of the armor of God.

Helmet of salvation

The helmet “made of thick leather, or brass, fitted to the head” (Barnes 1982:131) proved reliable and suitable in protecting the soldier from attack. Salvation plays this role for the Christian.

Based on 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Calvin understands the helmet of salvation to mean “the hope of salvation” (Calvin 1965:221). Mitton, based on Ephesians 2:5,8, argues that Paul intends the metaphor to mean salvation itself, that salvation which the believer has already experienced. “It is a glad awareness of having been put right with God, and the inward sense of ‘wholeness,’ peace and vitality which this brings” (Mitton 1976:227).

Both Calvin and Mitton are correct. Thus believers go to battle with full confidence that their salvation has already been secured by the grace of God. Paul, in writing to the Romans (8:31-39), assures them that no matter who or what is against the believer, “nothing can separate us from the love of God.” It is the hope of salvation, rooted as it is in the love of God, that strengthens the believer in the face of spiritual conflict. Thus Paul, recognizing that absence of this assurance would affect one’s performance in spiritual warfare, urges the believers to “put on the helmet of salvation.”

Shoes

There are two possible meanings for the phrase “having shod your feet with the gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15). The first emphasizes the sense of preparedness to preach the gospel; the second meaning has the sense of peace that comes from the appropriation of the gospel message. Foulkes, suggesting the latter meaning, states, “the knowledge of and dependence on the gospel that gives a man peace in his heart and life is a necessary equipment (like the hob nailed sandals of the Roman soldier) if he is to have a firm foothold in conflict” (1956:175).

In the context of battle, Foulkes’ interpretation seems the most appropriate. The peace which comes as a result of the knowledge of the gospel provides the necessary courage and determination to fight while advancing the gospel that will bring that same peace to those who receive it (cf. John 16:33). Campbell sums up the importance of this piece of armor when he notes that it not only “enables believers to unswervingly stand in active engagement in proclaiming the truth of the gospel to both the lost and the saved,” but also “has the power to break down partitions between men

and bring harmony and peace between them (Ephesians 2:14-16)” (1986:245).

Prayer

After prescribing to the Ephesian believers the armor of God, Paul turns to a divine means that places the believer in touch with God on every occasion, whatever the need and in a variety of ways. Campbell observes, “Regardless of when the time might be and the circumstances, believers are to maintain a prayer relationship with God” (1986:249). Paul adds that this prayer must be in the Spirit (cf. Ephesians 5:18-20; Romans 8:26-27; Jude 20; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Colossians 1:19).

To show the indispensability of prayer in a believer’s life, Barnes shares this invaluable insight based on this passage:

Prayer crowns all lawful efforts with success, and gives victory when nothing else would. No matter how skilled we may be in the science of war; no matter how courageous we may be, we may be certain that without prayer we shall be defeated. God alone can give the victory; and when the Christian soldier goes forth armed completely for the spiritual conflict, if he looks to God by prayer, he may be sure of triumph. (1982:133)

This study concurs with Barnes not only because the passage clearly supports his assertion, but because this truth was exemplified in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. Believers must emulate him to have the kind of victory he had over demonic forces. It is the responsibility of the believer to put on the whole armor of God and pray in the Spirit on every occasion and in an appropriate way for a variety of needs. The believer is assured of victory because the armor is God’s provision and because God hears and answers prayer.

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